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## **Compelled to Compete?**

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Carter, Helen Frances Lindsay

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# **COMPELLED TO COMPETE?**

## **Competitiveness and the Small City**

**Helen Carter**

**PhD Thesis**

**Department of Development and Planning**

**Aalborg University, Denmark**

Compelled to Compete? Competitiveness and the Small City

PhD Thesis

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# SUMMARY

‘Competitiveness’ is a widespread discourse in spatial development and planning, with a commonly-perceived need for places at all scales to ‘be competitive’. In this thesis the competitiveness discourse is investigated in the local government of a small city, a context in which competitiveness is seldom studied critically. This is an important issue in Denmark, where framings of spatial development and planning at both the national and local levels tend to place competitiveness as an essential legitimisation of various policy actions. This raises the question of whether local government in small cities is relatively powerless in the face of such a discourse, being perhaps compelled to compete.

The discourse of competitiveness is studied through the analytical concepts of story-lines, metaphors and institutionalisation of discourse. The first research question in this thesis relates to the framing of competitiveness at the national level, which is investigated through the story-lines and metaphors which are used to frame competitiveness in selected national ministries. The second and third research questions relate to the case study of Vejle Municipality, and lead to analysis of how competitiveness has come to be institutionalised over the last 30

years, and how competitiveness is framed and institutionalised in departments of the municipality concerned with spatial development today.

The empirical study is placed in the theoretical context of a critical literature, questioning spatial competitiveness and the implications of such a focus at the urban level. This is in contrast to a popular, policy-oriented literature on competitiveness, which focuses on improving and measuring competitiveness, and which is related to a transnational 'competitiveness industry', promoting this discourse at all governance scales. The critical literature on competitiveness is coupled with recent theoretical work on the small and 'ordinary' city, which proposes both that there is a need in urban studies for a growing focus on smaller places in urban studies, and also that there is potential for wider understandings of how cities can develop.

Through the analyses, a narrative is created of competitiveness as a diffuse discourse which local government is compelled to use in the framing of policies and plans. In Vejle Municipality there are several key competitiveness-oriented story-lines, which have developed over the period of the last 30 years, proving that competitiveness is a fairly new discourse in municipal planning. These story-lines present the municipality as a 'visionary' of the future, and articulate an increasingly extroverted view on the outside world in terms of comparison, cooperation and inspiration-seeking, and a growing focus on the 'need' for the municipality to be attractive to certain groups of people and businesses. These story-lines are reproduced throughout the municipality's departments working with spatial development, and are institutionalised through various organisational and policy practices. This narrative of municipal planning and policy-making sits within a national context of story-lines of Denmark as a 'leading country', which compares itself explicitly with similar places, and of 'internal competition' as being an essential part of the country's spatial development. Together the analyses produce a narrative of competitiveness as strongly institutionalised in both local and national government, although with a localised understanding of competitiveness in Vejle Municipality.

In a wider context, it is suggested that these findings are not extreme, with manifestations of the competitiveness discourse apparent in many Danish small cities, and the national focus on competitiveness in Denmark being broadly in line with international understandings of competitiveness. Yet the complex manner and range of ways in which competitiveness as a discourse is framed and manifested points to more than a direct compulsion for local government to behave in this way. Rather, it seems that competitiveness is a diffusely understood discourse, which influences local government practices and policy actions in a myriad of ways, and which is taken up in a fairly unreflective manner. Actors in local government are not compelled directly to think competitively, instead this compulsion is one they are playing a part in, reproducing and adapting competitiveness as a key discourse in spatial planning and policy.



# RESUMÉ

‘Konkurrenceevne’ er en udbredt diskurs i forhold til rumlig udvikling og planlægning, og det er en almindelig opfattelse, at steder i alle skalaer skal være ‘konkurrencedygtige’. I denne afhandling bliver denne konkurrenceevnediskurs undersøgt gennem et studie af en mindre by, som er en rumlig sammenhæng, hvor konkurrenceevne sjældent bliver undersøgt kritisk. Dette er et vigtigt emne, for ‘konkurrence’ er både i den lokale og den nationale skala blevet legitimerende for rumlig udvikling og planlægningspolitikker. Derfor stiller afhandlingen spørgsmålet, om lokalstyret i mindre byer er relativt magtesløs i forhold til denne diskurs og måske bliver ‘tvunget’ til at konkurrere.

Konkurrenceevnediskursen undersøges gennem de analytiske begreber ‘story-lines’, metaforer og institutionalisering af diskurs. Det første forskningsspørgsmål i afhandlingen handler om udformningen af konkurrenceevnediskurser på det nationale niveau. Dette undersøges gennem de ‘story-lines’ og metaforer, som bruges om konkurrenceevne i udvalgte ministerier. Det andet og tredje forskningsspørgsmål relaterer til et casestudie af Vejle Kommune, der fører til en analyse af hvordan konkurrenceevne er blevet

institutionaliseret gennem de sidste 30 år, samt hvordan konkurrenceevne bliver udformet og institutionaliseret i de kommunale forvaltninger, der i dag arbejder med rumlig udvikling.

Det empiriske studie er teoretisk placeret i en kritisk litteratur, som sætter spørgsmålstegn ved rumlig konkurrence og konsekvenserne af sådan et fokus på byer. Denne tilgang står i modsætning til en populær, politik-orienteret litteratur om konkurrenceevne, der fokuserer på forbedringer og målinger af konkurrenceevne, og som er relateret til en transnational 'konkurrenceevne-industri', der promoverer konkurrenceevne på alle styrings-niveauer. Den kritiske litteratur om konkurrenceevne er koblet sammen med nyere teoretiske arbejder om den mindre og 'almindelige' by, som foreslår, at der i byforskningen er behov for et bredere fokus på mindre byer, og at der er et potentiale for en videre forståelser af hvordan en by kan udvikle sig.

Gennem analyserne bliver der skabt en fortælling om konkurrenceevne som en diffus diskurs, som kommuner bliver drevet til at bruge i udformningen af politikker og planer. I Vejle Kommune er der flere vigtige konkurrenceevne-orienterede 'story-lines', der har udviklet sig gennem de sidste 30 år. Det viser, at konkurrenceevne er en relativt ny diskurs i kommuneplanlægning. Disse 'story-lines' viser kommunen som 'visionær' i forhold til fremtiden, og udtrykker et mere udadvendt syn på verden med hensyn til sammenligning, samarbejde og opsøgning af inspiration, samt et voksende fokus på 'behovet' for at kommunen skal tiltrække bestemte grupper af borgere og virksomheder. Disse 'story-lines' genskabes gennem kommunens forvaltninger, der arbejder med rumlig udvikling, og bliver institutionaliseret gennem forskellige organisatoriske og politiske praksisser. Denne fortælling om kommuneplanlægning og politik indgår i en nationale sammenhæng af 'story-lines'. Danmark ses som et 'førende land', som bliver sammenlignet med andre lignende steder, og hvor der eksisterer 'intern konkurrence', der ses som en uundgåelig del af rumlig udvikling. Tilsammen skaber analyserne en fortælling om konkurrenceevne som en stærkt institutionaliseret diskurs i både kommuner og på et nationalt niveau, med en lokaliseret forståelse af konkurrence i Vejle Kommune.

Det bliver foreslået, at disse resultater er ikke ekstreme. Manifestationer af konkurrenceevnediskurser er tydelige i mange mindre danske byer, og det nationale fokus på konkurrenceevne kan ses som tilsvarende internationale fortolkninger af konkurrenceevne. Alligevel fortolkes konkurrenceevne på komplekse og forskellige måder. Det peger på, at kommuner bliver ikke direkte 'tvunget' til at konkurrere. Tværtimod er konkurrenceevne en diskurs, som bliver forstået på diffuse måder, der påvirker kommuners praksis og politik på mange måder, og som bliver adopteret uden megen refleksion. Aktører i kommuner bliver ikke direkte tvunget til at tænke på konkurrenceevne. I stedet spiller de en rolle i at skabe, genskabe og tilpasse konkurrenceevne som en nøglediskurs i planlægning og politik.





# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

‘Competitiveness’ is a word which is used by policy makers and politicians alike, often as a justification of a particular policy or project, and with a sense of finality in certain debates, implying that something is necessary or else there will be little chance for a place or region in the future. Although the use of this word may seem inconsequential to some, I felt that the sweeping manner in which ‘competitiveness’ is used merited greater investigation. On the surface ‘competitiveness’ seems to be an economically-based and understood term, and one might assume that its meaning in planning and spatial policies is quite clear. Throughout the thesis I will investigate this, and show how ‘competitiveness’ in Denmark and in particular in a Danish small city is anything but clearly defined, despite its accepted-ness.

This thesis is about questioning this seemingly accepted ‘fact’ in spatial planning and policy-making, and in particular how that ‘fact’ is used in Danish spatial planning and policy-making, particularly at the urban level. Competitive is often perceived as something which countries, regions and municipalities, and much more besides, need to be. Competitiveness is not viewed as something which a

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spatial entity can choose or reject. The highly naturalised discourse of competitiveness in spatial planning and policy-making more generally has grabbed my attention, leading me to question whether such a focus should be taken for granted in the way it seems to be. It should be of concern when something gains such a focus in policy-making, as it is legitimising a particular use of resources and the types of projects and people which are prioritised.

‘Competitiveness’ does not just function in this way in international and national policy and in large cities, with politicians and policy makers in small cities also drawing on this ‘need’ to be competitive. At all policy levels there is a danger in any term or concept becoming uncritically accepted, as it follows that there is a lack of reflection on the directions in which this leads policies and projects. I find this to be a particular concern in terms of the small city, where the resources in question, as well as the potential rewards, may be less. The majority of small cities are not going to become internationally or even nationally recognised for their efforts, and if people and companies are as mobile as the competitiveness idea would have us believe, then they can leave a small city as easily as they can come. In short, it seems there is potentially less to win and more to lose for the small city in striving to be competitive. It is also questionable whether small cities have a ‘choice’ in this planning and policy world where competitiveness is so naturalised. Furthermore, critical studies of small cities, and of competitiveness in small cities, are few.

### **Competitiveness and Small Cities**

‘Competitiveness’, and in particular spatial competitiveness, is conceptualised in two particular ways in planning and urban studies literature. The first of these conceptualisations relates to a policy-oriented understanding of competitiveness, and this is a literature which has a strong relation to policy. Here the concept of competitiveness is understood as an unquestionable condition, aim and result of spatial policy-making. This is a literature which is in particular inspired by economics and business studies, and which often focuses on the measurement

and improvement of the competitiveness of spatial entities (e.g. Porter 1995, 1998b; Parkinson *et al* 2004). On top of this explicit desire to measure and increase competitiveness, there is also a related literature which takes the ‘competitiveness’ concept as part of its foundation, promoting particular modes of urban development as the way in which a city can ‘be competitive’ (e.g. Pine & Gilmore 1998; Landry 2000; Florida 2002). This includes, for example, an emphasis on attracting the so-called ‘creative class’ to cities (Florida 2002), or on exploiting the potential of the ‘experience economy’ (Pine & Gilmore 1998). This literature has a strong policy link, in terms of having fairly clear statements of the policies which should be undertaken to make a place ‘competitive’.

The other conceptualisation of competitiveness in the literature is the critical, which is where I am situating my understanding of competitiveness. Here, particularly with reference to the city as a spatial entity, there is a questioning of both the reification of competitiveness and of the policies which this can lead to (e.g. Bristow 2005, 2010; Peck & Tickell 2002; Peck 2004; Harvey 1989; Jessop & Sum 2000; Hubbard & Hall 1998; Cochrane 2007). Within this critical literature, competitiveness is often conceptualised as a neoliberal discourse, related to the general increase of neoliberal governance approaches and policy-making in many countries and cities across the world. This critical literature leads to a view of ‘competitiveness’ as a problem of restricted policy-making, limited to a particular view of the world, and particularly of economic and growth concerns as priorities over all others.

These two conceptualisations of competitiveness each have their place in this thesis. The normative, policy-related conceptualisation plays a part in the accepted position of ‘competitiveness’ in spatial policy-making, and in that respect is part of the object of research. The critical literature on the other hand provides a background and position for ‘unwrapping’ competitiveness and examining it as particular understanding of how spatial entities operate, rather than as the natural state of the world.

The second theme which is key to this thesis is that of small cities. This could be used as a delimitation of research, in terms of the cases which are chosen.

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However there is a move in some literature towards conceptualising small cities as more than an empirical category (Bell & Jayne 2006, 2009; Jayne *et al* 2010; Waitt & Gibson 2009). These authors are keen to study small cities in their own right, rather than looking to large cities as the pinnacle of urbanism and resorting to the superlatives which larger cities often have attached to them (Beauregard 2003; Brenner 2003). As well as this literature on small cities, this thesis also takes inspiration from the growing 'ordinary cities' literature (Amin & Graham 1997; Robinson 2002, 2006, 2009). This is a literature which calls for a wider understanding of what it is to be urban, both in terms of the different cities which are studied, and in terms of the different sectors of urban policy-making which are taken into consideration. This literature is particularly pertinent in terms of its focus on creating a greater range of policy-making opportunities and choices for those in urban governance, instead of focusing on limited ideas of what it means to be a 'successful city'.

These two theoretical concepts, competitiveness and small cities, are central to my thesis. They are however infused with my research approach, which is just as important, if not more so, in shaping the thesis research. I have chosen to take a discursive research approach, so I am viewing competitiveness as a discourse. As I stated at the beginning, my interest in 'competitiveness' was roused by its use as a linguistic device in shutting off a debate, but also in terms of its role in forming and rationalising a particular mode of spatial policy-making and legitimising particular policies. Therefore this discursive approach offers a way in which I can investigate this view, as well as the process of change which has led to competitiveness occupying this privileged position. Studying competitiveness as a discourse offers this focus on change, as well as a mode of uncovering the way of thinking underneath this use of language.

In particular I have been inspired by the discursive approaches of Hajer (1995) and Schön (1979), as well as a variety of approaches to narratives in planning research (Flyvbjerg 1998; Throgmorton 1996). Generally the research approach is critical and focused on change over time, in terms of the processes of institutionalisation of discourses. I interpret discourses in particular through the

concepts of ‘metaphors’ and ‘story-lines’, to enable me to examine the diverse ways in which competitiveness is understood in policy-making.

Empirically this thesis is based in a Danish context, with the analysis of competitiveness both at the national policy-making level in Denmark, and of Vejle, a municipality based around a small city, and its framings and story-lines of competitiveness. From the outside, Denmark is a country which is viewed in the Scandinavian social democratic welfare context, and it might be falsely assumed that neoliberal policy and the discourse of competitiveness have little influence. Part of the contribution of this study is looking at these trends within such a context, both in terms of discussing the particular manner, or ‘variety’ (Peck 2004), of competitiveness in Denmark, as well as widening the context in which these concepts are studied. Furthermore, much work on municipal planning and urban governance in Denmark has either been rather functionally-based, or has focused on dichotomising entrepreneurial city governance with welfare aims (e.g. Hansen *et al* 2001; Desfor & Jørgensen 2004; Andersen & Pløger 2007; Majoor 2008), the latter work often being based on studies of Copenhagen. Within this thesis, I focus on the understandings of competitiveness at the local level in Denmark in their own right, as well as basing the analysis on a smaller Danish city. This is a pertinent focus, both in terms of investigating competitiveness in a country which has had a tradition for social democratic policy-making, with welfare as a national priority, and also in terms of investigating how competitiveness, often viewed in terms of globalisation and international trends, is interpreted in a small city. The study of a Danish municipality brings together these two ideas, in terms of local interpretations of this wider idea of competitiveness, and also as Danish municipalities have traditionally been strong policy actors and key providers of welfare services. It is therefore interesting how ‘competitiveness’ can be interpreted within local government that has not always had a tradition for thinking or acting in this way.

## **Research Problem and Questions**

In the 2000s ‘competitiveness’ has been a policy buzzword in various circles. The OECD places a focus on the ‘competitiveness of cities’ (2006). The Nordic countries should be a “global winner region” (Nordiske Råd 2005). Today, in 2011, there are economic concerns across the world and a growing focus on ‘austerity’ in many states and regions, and the ongoing issue in much of Europe of the sustainability of the welfare state in this time of economic decline, and with an ever ageing population. This is the context within which this research is placed. Within Denmark these concerns are resonant, particularly as it is a country with a traditionally strong welfare state. The spatial expressions of these types of problems are also a growing focus, particularly framed in terms of ‘edge Denmark’ (*Udkantsdanmark*), with its lack of economic development and population exodus being of particular concern in policy-making circles and the media. This frame of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’, fundamentally related to ‘competitiveness’, has been positioned strongly on the urban structure of Denmark. All but the most major cities are placed within this frame of survival, with a belief in their need to specialise in a particular identity in order to compete ‘successfully’.

The problem with this situation is the pressure that is potentially placed on policy-makers in countries, regions and cities to follow particular modes of development in order to ‘win’ development and growth in this competitively-framed world. When development is framed in terms of such a race for survival, there is no option not to take part. In this pressured situation there is a greater probability that policies and strategies will be taken up with haste as they appear to have ‘succeeded’ elsewhere or because they will likely offer growth in the short-term. Furthermore there are questions about whether local government in particular is really focusing on the major tasks they were created to fulfil, as the overriding concern with a ‘competition’ may take over. There is the possibility of these dangers in a situation where competitiveness is seemingly naturalised as a spatial phenomenon, making it appear as an essential context and focus point.

There are a number of problems which merit closer investigation, several of which I will take up in this thesis. If competitiveness is truly ‘naturalised’ as a spatial phenomenon at the local level, it is interesting to investigate how this has occurred. And furthermore, as competitiveness is particularly a focus at international and national scales and in larger cities, how is it really understood by local government in a small city, which is envisaged to be at the bottom of a hierarchy of policy-making scales.

Firstly, as I have stated in reference to the above problem, competitiveness is a discourse at different scales, all of which contribute to creating this naturalised landscape of competitiveness. This landscape is the one within which local governments find themselves, and therefore should not be neglected in this investigation. This leads to the question:

*How is competitiveness framed in Danish policy at the national level?*

As I have stated, I am contending that competitiveness is naturalised in Denmark at the scale of local government, and if this is the case competitiveness must have undergone a process of institutionalisation. Through examining different story-lines in municipal planning, I can examine how the competitiveness discourse has been institutionalised over time, contesting its ‘natural’ character, rather than being something which has always controlled municipal planning.

*How has the competitiveness discourse been institutionalised historically in municipal planning in a small city?*

Finally, it is interesting to consider whether the competitiveness discourse is a single, hegemonic discourse, or whether it exists in a particular way in a small city. The third and final question which will focus the analysis in this thesis is based around this potential, looking more widely within the organisation of local government than planning. By examining the understandings of the discourse of competitiveness across the contemporary organisation of a municipality, this should illuminate the nuances of the discourse in the small city.



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*How have competitiveness-oriented story-lines been framed and institutionalised across the contemporary organisation of local government in a small city?*

Each of these three questions will be tackled in an individual analytical chapter (chapters five to seven respectively). The latter two questions will focus on a case study of Vejle Municipality, drawing on document studies, interviews and other sources of evidence. The first question will be answered through an overview of documents studies in two national departments focusing on competitiveness, also supported by interviews. This process will be described in greater detail in chapter four.

Throughout this thesis I will refer to both the ‘small city’, ‘local government’ and ‘Vejle Municipality’. The ‘small city’ is a broader concept, linked to many of the ideas that will be discussed in chapter three. The terms ‘local government’ and ‘municipality’ are more specifically used to refer to the organisation which I am studying empirically within the small city.

### **Thesis Structure**

This thesis can be broadly conceived as having three parts. In the first part I will discuss perspectives from the literature and outline the ‘problem’ to be examined, as well as discussing the research approach. In the second part I will present the analysis of the case study. In the third part I will discuss the broader implications and draw conclusions on the research questions.

In the first part I will introduce the field within which I am situating my work, through discussing the two major concepts which have shaped the thesis. The first of these is the key discourse for analysis, ‘competitiveness’. In chapter two I will discuss the different academic work on competitiveness, which I characterise as falling into two broad positions. I will then highlight the particular view on competitiveness which I am taking, and the problems which I outline in the literature to address in this thesis. Chapter three will then introduce the

conceptualisation of the small city, and will focus on the gaps that seem to exist in this particular literature. This will be followed in chapter four by the assembly of the research approach for this thesis, including the analytical strategy to be used in part two.

In the second part I will start present the analysis, in chapters five to seven. Chapter five is the analysis of the national policy-making situation of Denmark and the discourse of competitiveness within this in, which is related to the first research question. The analysis of Vejle Municipality, which forms the majority of the empirical analysis of this thesis, will then comprise chapters six and seven. In chapter six I will take an historical perspective of municipal planning to examine the institutionalisation of story-lines of competitiveness in Vejle Municipality, addressing the second research question. In chapter seven I will continue to analyse the story-lines I have interpreted in chapter six; however with this analysis I will be investigating the different understanding of competitiveness across a number of the departments of Vejle Municipality, as well as how competitiveness is institutionalised within these departments, answering the third research question.

In the final part of the thesis, chapter eight, I will summarise the empirical findings for each of the research questions in turn and also more generally, to highlight the major points which I interpret as emerging from the empirical work. I will follow this by reflecting on the research approach and consider to what degree I can generalise from the empirical findings. I will follow this reflection with a discussion of the wider contextual and conceptual conclusions, considering both the more general significance of my findings for Danish policy-making in small cities, and also what my findings allow me to state with regard to the theoretical concepts used in the thesis.



# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **COMPETITIVENESS AND THE CITY**

### **Introduction**

‘Competitiveness’ is the central concept in this thesis. I could fill many pages with ‘facts’ and measurements about competitiveness, discussing how one place is viewed to be ‘succeeding’ better in competition than others, and why this might be. It is precisely this discussion I wish to take a step back from. These understandings of competition between places as a fact, with competitiveness as something which places either have or lack, is what I wish to question. Competitiveness between places is often taken-for-granted and presented as something obvious and intuitive; however it is important to look at this critically and at the role this conception of ‘competitiveness’ seems to play in planning and policy-making.

These kinds of questions, about unpacking something which seems indisputable, and about looking at something ‘factual’ in a critical manner, have led me to characterise competitiveness in a particular way and through a particular literature. Firstly, I am discussing competitiveness as a discourse, which is

connected to the research approach which I will assemble in chapter four. Secondly, there is a critical literature, which questions and discusses tendencies of neoliberalism, the idea of the 'entrepreneurial city' and related topics.

In this chapter I discuss competitiveness and competition, focusing on spatial competitiveness. These ideas can crudely be divided into debates about the existence of spatial competitiveness, its measurement and improvement, and debates about the production, reproduction and implications of spatial competitiveness. From a discussion of this dichotomy, I move on to conceptualising competitiveness as a neoliberal discourse, a product of the late 20th and early 21st century. Within all these debates I am particularly concerned with the urban scale, the 'competitive city'. I finish the chapter discussing the critical approach I am taking, focusing on the small city in Denmark. This leads into chapter three, where I discuss the concept of the 'small city'.

### **Spatial Competitiveness - a policy-oriented literature**

The focus of this research is competitiveness as a spatial discourse. This has connections with other discourses and conceptions of competitiveness and competition, for example the economic and the social, however it is the distinctly spatial elements which are the central focus here. Competitiveness comes to the fore in a policy-oriented literature, where it is a generally accepted idea about the way in which countries, regions, cities and other spatial entities are in constant competition with each other, usually placed within a context of a globalising world. As Sheppard puts it, competition "is all the rage" (2000:169).

A substantial body of well-known literature, which takes its point of departure in economics and business studies, focuses on the competitiveness of spatial entities, and on how this can be measured and improved. Porter (1998b) is often cited as the contemporary origin of much of this work, starting with his 1990 book *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*. Here he argues that nations are analogous with firms when it comes to 'competitiveness', following on from his work on

firms and business strategy in *Competitive Advantage* (1998a). Porter (1995) has also extended this work to a lower scale, considering the competitiveness of the city in these terms as well.

The general concept of competitiveness has been resolutely taken up by both scholars and policy-makers. Others argue against the work of those like Porter on the basis that the competitiveness of a spatial unit such as a 'nation' is a fallacy in itself. Krugman (1996a, 1996b) is perhaps the most well-known and outspoken of these critics, both in the academic and popular press. For Krugman competitiveness is a "dangerous obsession" (1996a). However, as I will discuss later, whether or not one agrees that it is possible to have competitive spatial entities, this way of thinking has undoubtedly had an influence on policy making, and numerous academics have also taken up and promoted the idea of 'competitive cities'.

For example, Duffy (1995) has authored a book entitled *Competitive Cities: Succeeding in the global economy*. Within the introduction of this book, which is based on case studies of four cities in North America and the UK, Duffy recites the now common logic of global markets, increasing competitiveness of firms, and therefore increasing competitiveness of cities, again drawing particularly on Porter in this train of thought. This competitiveness then apparently requires a response from local governments, although Duffy acknowledges such responses can be, and usually are, diverse. For the cities she is studying the loss of industry, people and jobs require drastic action to be taken, and focuses have ranged from international trade to culture. This demonstrates another layer to the competitiveness logic related to scale - that particular forces at the global scale lead to particular actions at the local scale, with these local level actions being diverse, but generally taken from a range which includes financial services, culture, creativity, large events and other familiar themes.

In a similar style to Duffy (1995), Begg writes in the book *Urban Competitiveness: Policies for dynamic cities* (2002) that "it is urban activities that today are the principal foundations of economic prosperity" (2002:1). This means that there are "compelling reasons for investigating the competitiveness position of cities

and for trying to understand how the ‘competitiveness’ or ‘performance’ of cities can be enhanced” (2002:1). This is the kind of thinking which underlies the normative literature on urban competitiveness - that urban competitiveness is a key facet of society today, so it is important we consider how to measure and improve it. Begg (2002) recognises that urban competitiveness is a poorly understood concept, with a number of different definitions, however his premises for understanding it also accepts it as a reality. This resonates with my understanding of competitiveness as having a discursive character, being a constellation of ideas and concepts rather than a single concept with an objective definition.

Beyond these areas of literature which focus on the concept of competitiveness quite explicitly, there are other areas which are grounded in a belief in competitive nations or cities, focusing on the improvement of this competitiveness through particular measures. Some of Porter’s work also fits in this area, for example focusing on clusters of businesses as an important driver of the economy of the inner city (Porter 1995). In this area I would include the work of Florida (2002) and Landry (2000), both of whom have worked with the idea of creativity and city, and have enjoyed a wide uptake of their work in policy circles. Many of these areas have what Sum (2009) refers to as ‘knowledge brand’ status, in that they are policy-oriented ‘theories’ promoted around the world through networks of universities, consultancies and institutions.

Rankings and hierarchies are often linked to particular measures and policies of improving competitiveness. Such rankings are produced by greatly varying sources, from independent think tanks, to academics, to government agencies. Florida’s (2002) work is one example of the promotion of a certain manner of improving competitiveness, alongside a ranking which shows how certain cities are ‘doing’, which he has dubbed the ‘creativity index’. Sum (2009) has looked at various benchmarking exercises at the international level, for example the rankings of countries which are produced annually by the World Economic Forum, viewing these as a technology of the competitiveness discourse, contributing to the reproduction of neoliberal policies across different scales and contexts. Many national governments also produce their own ‘rankings’, either of

cities or sectors which they regard as being important to competitiveness. In 2004 a group of British academics produced the report *Competitive European Cities* for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which examines the competitiveness of core British cities through indicators such as quality of life, strategic capacity, connectivity and skilled workforce. The report then compares these cities to 'key' European cities, and then Europe in comparison to world competitiveness rankings (Parkinson *et al* 2004). Therefore this kind of national report can be viewed in a similar light, contributing to reproducing a particular understanding of the 'necessity' for policy-making to focus on the competitiveness of places.

Much of this normative literature on competitiveness is also related to policy, in terms of explicitly making policy recommendations, or in terms of a direct link to policy making in the production of knowledge. This is a point which has also been picked up on by certain academics, like in Sum's (2009) aforementioned discussion of particular academic work as 'knowledge brands' sold by 'guru' academics. Lovering (1999) is strongly critical of the concept of 'competitiveness', especially as it is often used in academia, in terms of its policy origins and the often loose and abstract use of the term in academia which has followed this. He interprets competitiveness as a concept which has been appropriated by academics after its appearance on the policy agenda. Discussing competitiveness within a 'new regionalist' agenda, he states that this "demonstrates that the construction of knowledge in a research community which has become casual about philosophical, methodological and substantive questions can easily be deformed by the policy agendas of powerful institutions" (Lovering 1999:393). Schoenberger (1998) also notes the role which academics have likely played in popularising and normalising the term 'competitiveness', although she is less explicit about its movement from policy discourse to subject of academic study.

The policy-academia link in discussing competitiveness is perhaps most strongly evident at a European Union (EU) level, where the idea of 'competitiveness' has been enshrined in various policies and statements, often alongside another discourse, 'cohesion'. A collection edited by Ache *et al.* (2008) to some extent demonstrates the academic and policy blurring which Lovering (1999) and



Schoenberger (1998) are concerned with. Entitled *Cities between Competitiveness and Cohesion*, the book is the result of a working group on “Entrepreneurial Cities between Growth and Welfare”, funded by a European Union Cost Action. The EU bent is already evident in the title, with its reference not just to competitiveness, but also to its European bedfellow, cohesion. In the introduction it is stated that “a delicate balance between social cohesion and competitiveness has become a major challenge at sub-national level” (Ache & Andersen 2008:4). This work highlights both an important understanding of the competitiveness discourse in policy in Europe, alongside the discourse of ‘cohesion’.

Therefore it is apparent that this policy-oriented competitiveness literature focuses on competitiveness as a ‘natural’ element of a ‘globalised world’, and the various ways in which the competitiveness of cities and other spatial units can be measured and improved upon. This includes literature focusing on the competitiveness of firms and equating this with the city, as well as literature which focuses on measuring competitiveness through various indicators. A less explicitly competitiveness-oriented area of the literature focuses on particular modes of development, for example ‘creativity’, framing these as essential for a competitive city. These ideas have brought a concern amongst some academics about the relationship between academia and policy in competitiveness literature, viewing academia either as complicit in creating this ‘reality’, or even a thoughtless followers of particular directions in policy. This final point brings us neatly to the second area of literature which I have conceptualised, the more critical approach to competitiveness and the city.

### **Competitive Cities - the critical approach**

The second body of literature which I have conceptualised takes a view of questioning and critiquing the common ideas of city development, in contrast to the policy-oriented literature. Rather than trying to offer popular solutions to urban problems, the literature questions the foundations upon which such ideas

and solutions build. In terms of the critical literature, the question is not 'how' a city can be competitive, rather it is why, if at all, a city should strive to be these things, and what the implications might be.

This critical angle is really the anchoring point of this thesis, as is also reflected in the research approach in chapter four; however this does not mean that the literature presented above is not of interest. Rather the policy-oriented literature can be conceived as part of the object of study of this research. As will be discussed in the research approach chapter, the discursive approach is entwined with a critical approach to certain unquestioned concepts and ideas.

In criticising the competitiveness discourse, it is interesting to consider why competitiveness is so persuasive as a spatial discourse. Sheppard (2000) considers part of this to be due to the strength of the competitiveness metaphor, which has been used in various forms in economic theory, social theory and biological evolutionary theory. This is particularly notable as in each of these areas competitiveness is generally viewed positively, as something which 'improves' the groups or things subjected to it. Sheppard (2000) considers these metaphors, and decentres the idea of competitiveness as 'natural' somewhat. For example, Darwinian theory is often used to justify the 'naturalness' of capitalist competition, and has even been used to justify various social experiments, but Darwin himself "borrowed the idea" (Sheppard 2000:170) from the 18th century economist Thomas Malthus. Stoddart (1986) argues for the strong impact of Darwin on geography, and the view of a geometrically expanding population (borrowed from Malthus) and hence the problem of resources is one which has strongly influenced social thinking, for example in terms of being used "to justify laissez-faire in politics and economics" (Stoddart 1986:172). The most pertinent point which Stoddart makes which is of interest here is the potential for other interpretations of social and economic problems. Stoddart sees this interpretation of Darwin in social and economic terms as somewhat crude. He cites amongst others the work of Kropotkin on cooperation and mutual aid as an opposing example. This already indicates some grounds for suspicion of the accepted status of competitiveness, with the metaphor shifting between different fields, each field looking to each other as the legitimising 'truth'.

### *Neoliberalism and Competitiveness*

In the critical literature on urban competitiveness, the discussion of 'competitiveness' is bound up with more general discussions of neoliberalism and its role in urban policy-making, including critical conceptualisations of the 'entrepreneurial city'. Neoliberalism is a notoriously "rascal concept" (Brenner *et al* 2010:184) in terms of the multitude of definitions and contestations, and it has been criticised for its apparent ability to be used to describe anything and everything (Larner 2003). In recent years neoliberalism has been used in particular by critics to characterise a wide range of trends and phenomena. Harvey defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" (Harvey 2005:2). It is the discursive character of neoliberalism which is mainly of interest in this thesis, and in that regard, a precise definition is not absolutely necessary. The status of neoliberalism as "a commonsense of the times" (Peck & Tickell 2002:34) is most interesting, as well as "its necessitarian, there-is-no-alternative character and its invocation of a 'politics of inevitability' based on a deference to (global) economic forces" (Peck 2004:394).

Within a neoliberal doctrine, the role of the state is confined to backing up neoliberal political economic practices, in terms of creating the necessary institutional framework (Harvey 2005). It is important to note that there are great differences between 'pure' neoliberal ideology and the practice of neoliberalism. Brenner & Theodore refer to this as a "rather blatant disjuncture between the ideology of neoliberalism and its everyday political operations and effects" (2002:5). Whilst the ideological side of neoliberalism emphasises a minimal role for the state and the open functioning of the market, the practice of neoliberalism is closer to "a dramatic intensification of coercive, disciplinary forms of state intervention in order to impose market rule upon all aspects of social life" (Brenner & Theodore 2002:5). Furthermore, the implications of neoliberal governance have seldom proved to be 'optimal' in the manner which

the ideology imagines, with amongst other things, increasing social polarisation and uneven spatial development being common consequences (Brenner & Theodore 2002). Therefore this underlines another interesting property of neoliberalism, aside from its discursive and ‘naturalised’ character. The ideology and the practice of neoliberalism can in fact be quite different, and the implications of neoliberalism are not entirely positive, as the ideology might imply. This implies that by viewing competitiveness as a neoliberal discourse, there is also potential that the actual implications of competitiveness are not the same as the positive picture being propagated in the normative and policy-oriented literature discussed above.

Harvey refers to competition as a “primary virtue” of neoliberalism (2005:65), and Bristow points out that a “preoccupation with competitiveness is premised on certain pervasive beliefs, more notably that globalization has drastically changed the structural properties of the global economy and that best practice governance is secured through neoliberalism” (2010:3). Others point out that competitiveness, despite being something which has been discussed for many years, has increased in importance due to neoliberalism: “‘Competitiveness’ has long been a concern for policy-makers but its significance has expanded rapidly in the past two decades in a globalized world organized increasingly along neoliberal lines.” (Sum 2009:184). These contentions are familiar from the literature I discussed in the first part of this chapter, however the difference here is the critical discussion of them.

The critical view on competitiveness considers the fact that ‘competitiveness’ is invoked in a variety of contexts within urban governance. Through the view of competitiveness as a discourse, it is possible to take a different starting point to the study of urban competitiveness. This involves looking at competitiveness in a similar way to Rosamund (2002), who in his study of the social construction of Europe saw competitiveness as a “sedimented and banal” idea, which is “becoming commonsensical and barely discussed” (2002:158). Fougner (2006) has taken a similar view, examining competitiveness as a discourse which is both naturalised and presented as having a long history.

Bristow (2005, 2010) has developed an extensive critique of regional competitiveness. In particular she focuses on the ill-defined and all-encompassing nature of competitiveness, and argues that its 'elasticity' has increased its attractiveness to policy-makers - it "has become a malleable policy garbage can into which a range of policy problems and solutions can be pitched" (2010:44). Furthermore, Bristow places focus on the persuasiveness of the discourse of regional competitiveness, which "has become a strategic, rhetorical device that is used to legitimate the decentralisation of economic governance, supply-side economic interventions and performance measurement imperatives" (Bristow 2005:301).

There are a number of points to take further from the view of competitiveness as a neoliberal tendency. Firstly, a feature of neoliberalism is that it is often framed by its proponents as 'natural' and as having broadly positive effects. Secondly, part of this 'naturalness' is that it is understood in a fairly undefined, commonsensical manner, and this has consequences for the policies and plans which might result from such an understanding.

### *The Competitive City*

Neoliberalism at the urban scale has been of growing interest, particularly in light of theorisations which have emphasised a declining role of the nation state. Leitner *et al* (2007) have conceptualised several facets of the 'neoliberal city'. In terms of city authorities, these include the replacement of social welfare oriented municipal organisations with "professionalized quasi-public agencies" (Leitner *et al* 2007:4), the general privatisation of urban services and the encouragement of competition amongst public agencies. The citizens of neoliberal cities are also envisaged in a certain way, being expected to "make their contribution to the collective economic welfare alongside their hard-working fellow citizens" (2007:4). However the facet which Leitner *et al* (2007) highlight which I would also like to discuss further here is that of the 'entrepreneurial city', which is

“directing all its energies to achieving economic success in competition with other cities for investments, innovations and ‘creative classes’” (2007:4).

The ‘entrepreneurial’ city is a particular way of conceptualising neoliberal urban governance. It is over twenty years since Harvey (1989) characterised a shift from ‘managerialism’ to ‘entrepreneurialism’, and this entrepreneurialism have proved of interest ever since, and comes into even greater focus with recent interest in critiques of neoliberalism. Cochrane (2007) conceptualises this shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism as a general one, where urban policy has gained an economic focus, and urban problems are redefined as primarily problems of economic decline. The entrepreneurial city focuses on local economic development through “innovative strategies” (Jessop & Sum 2000:2289), and local government becomes “imbued with characteristics once distinctive to business - risk-taking, inventiveness, promotion and profit motivation” (Hubbard & Hall 1998:2). This understanding also attributes a specific role to urban governance, in terms of being an active participant responsible for development, rather than “the victims of wider structural forces” (Cochrane 2007:97). A further characteristic which Jessop & Sum (2000) see as crucial is an accompanying focus on narrating the city as entrepreneurial, highlighting that these kinds of strategies are not just ‘carried out’, but are also part of a discursive construction of that city as entrepreneurial.

Conceptualising cities as ‘entrepreneurial’ is a specific way of looking at cities. This emphasises the local economic development focus of urban governance, as well as the business-like character of local governance, with emphasis on aspects such as place promotion. It also places the responsibility for development squarely at the door of local government, in a way that mirrors the “individual entrepreneurial freedoms” (Harvey 2005:2) reified by neoliberalism. There is also an emphasis on the discursive construction of the city as entrepreneurial, in that the proactive role attributed to urban governance is not just ‘held’, but is also narrated.

Spatially, neoliberalism has “helped to usher in, and to legitimize and enforce, a new regime of highly competitive interlocal relations, such that just about all local

social settlements were becoming tendentially subject in one way or another to the disciplinary force of neoliberalized spatial relations” (Peck & Tickell 2002:39). Furthermore neoliberalism has played a role not just in creating specific institutions and places, but also in creating the ‘rules’ of the game. This means that cities are themselves “facilitating and subsidizing” (Peck & Tickell 2002:46) the mobility of people and capital, which is exactly what has created problems of lack of development for some places. The idea that some cities have ‘succeeded’ through certain strategies furthers and legitimises the desire to develop in certain ways, and use neoliberal and entrepreneurial development strategies. Therefore in many ways neoliberalism has created the “‘rules’ of interlocal competition by shaping the very metrics by which regional competitiveness, public policy, corporate performance, or social productivity are measured” (Peck & Tickell 2002:40). This is a point which links to the policy-oriented literature promoting benchmarking and city rankings, whereby these types of reports and measurements contribute to the way competitiveness is perceived and the ‘rules’ by which policy-makers should play to ‘succeed’.

Acceptance of inter-urban competition is an implicit part of being an entrepreneurial city, for example the first part of Jessop & Sum’s definition of the entrepreneurial city is that it undertakes not just “innovative strategies”, but “innovative strategies intended to maintain or enhance its economic competitiveness *vis-à-vis* other cities and economic spaces” (2000:2289). The idea of inter-urban competition owes a lot to Porter’s (1995) conception of spatial entities as being similar to firms, with the thinking being that “the only way that cities can compete in an increasingly unpredictable and globalised economy is by pursuing specific proactive strategies designed to secure competitive advantages over their perceived competitors” (Hubbard & Hall 1998:2). Therefore the understanding of a city as being similar to a firm, and the accompanying perception of competition with other cities, lies centrally behind the assumed need for a city to be entrepreneurial.

However, this idea of inter-urban competition is not by any means unproblematic. Peck & Tickell point out that “local responses to global competition are more likely to be about competing even harder rather than about co-operating more

effectively” (1994:317). This relates to Harvey’s (1989) idea that the majority of cities are really engaging in a zero-sum competition, or what Jessop (1998) has called ‘weak competition’, whereby there is little overall benefit to a city ‘competing’. Places are just competing over a finite amount of ‘development’ and are simply outdoing each other, rather than creating any extra value. Peck & Tickell are also sceptical of “[l]ocal strategies - aimed particularly at securing mobile (public and private) investment - have become more prominent and more pervasive not because they provide the ‘answer’, but because they represent a common tactical response to political-economic disorder at the global scale” (1994:318). Any benefits of this kind of strategising for competition are likely to be short-term, and ‘keeping’ benefits or growth may be even more difficult than actually attracting it. Overall Peck & Tickell go even further than professing a ‘zero-sum’ competition, stating that “the competition engendered seems to be at best a zero-sum game and at worst destructive” (1994:323).

Within the individual city, particular types of projects are seen to typify neoliberalism and entrepreneurialism. In Harvey’s (1989) article, he discusses waterfront regeneration and various projects surrounding this, which is quite familiar in many cities today. Others view larger ‘strategic urban projects’, often where entirely new districts are constructed with a view to becoming economic growth areas, as fundamentally neoliberal (Salet & Gualini 2007). ‘Cultural’ projects, such as art galleries and concert halls, are also often placed in this category, and justified by city authorities as part of a neoliberal entrepreneurialist agenda. Furthermore, the types of governance arrangements which are often a part of these projects are also worth noting, focusing on partnerships and other modes of private involvement. All of this can be viewed in the light of “the powerful disciplinary effects of interurban competition” (Peck & Tickell 2002:46), whereby cities “are induced to jump on the bandwagon of urban entrepreneurialism, which they do with varying degrees of enthusiasm and effectiveness” (Peck & Tickell 2002:46). All of this points strongly to competitiveness, in a critical neoliberal frame, as something urban governance is ‘compelled’ to by various economic and political practices.



Peck & Tickell (2002) suggest that inter-urban competition should not be reduced entirely to a product of neoliberalism; they propose a variety of ways in which neoliberalism has reinforced and normalised ideas of inter-urban competition. These include the normalisation of a 'growth-first' perspective, where social concerns come after economic development, investment and jobs; a naturalisation of the market and a belief it is intrinsically fair; the prevalence of this ideology in funding agencies; and the narrow focus of urban policies, with branding, local boosterism and city centre makeovers as key. Peck & Tickell (2002) also make the important point that urban entrepreneurialism should not be viewed as simply a local manifestation of neoliberalism, rather the increase in this form of local governance is connected to the macro level rise of neoliberalism.

This idea of 'growth-first' is particularly interesting, in that Peck & Tickell (2002) state that social-welfarist arrangements are viewed "as anticompetitive costs and rendering issues of distribution and social investment as antagonistic to the overriding objectives of *economic* development" (2002:47, original emphasis). Therefore they are underlining that in neoliberal urban governance, competitiveness or growth and social welfare are viewed as mutually exclusive to a degree, in that social welfarist projects are seen as fundamentally non-competitive. This is a dichotomy which is also familiar in much of the critical literature, in that many authors are concerned that social welfare is set aside because of neoliberal aims. Furthermore, this is a concern which is also addressed in some of the normative, policy-oriented literature, albeit in a different manner. Ache *et al* (2008), for example, emphasise that although 'competitiveness' and 'cohesion' are viewed as opposites or in this mutually exclusive manner, they attempt to argue that this is not the case, and particular policy solutions can prevent this very dichotomy. However this continues to be a concern in the critical literature, and it is also familiar in much of the Danish research in this field.

In Denmark there is a somewhat disparate body of work examining neoliberalism, entrepreneurial cities and competitiveness. Desfor & Jørgensen (2004) have discussed the entrepreneurial city, specifically the development of the Copenhagen Waterfront, and they discuss the flexible forms of urban governance

which were utilised in this project, part of an overall aim of making Copenhagen the ‘growth engine’ for the whole of Denmark. As with much academic work based in the Scandinavian context, they question the bypassing of traditional planning mechanisms and local democracy. Majoor (2008) comes to a similar conclusion regarding the difficulty of reconciling the traditionally progressive Danish planning system with a large urban development project with explicitly neoliberal aims, again using a case from Copenhagen. Andersen & Pløger (2007) are perhaps the most explicit in interpreting a dichotomy between neoliberal urban governance and the traditional Danish welfare-orientation, where they characterise a general ‘dualism’ in urban governance. They see a “striking duality and tension” (Andersen & Pløger 2007:1349) between welfare-oriented community strategies and neoliberal market-oriented growth strategies.

Hansen *et al.* (2001) have also studied Copenhagen, where they address the proposition that ‘creative city’ rhetoric in Copenhagen has an overly positive angle, and that this allows a glossing over of potential social costs. For them, the idea of Copenhagen as a creative city is “a dubious ideological smokescreen to cover up the social costs associated with compulsive adaptation to the ‘requirements’ of the ‘new’ flexible globalized economy” (Hansen *et al.* 2001:866). They express very valid concerns, and these suggest the importance of examining the mechanisms of the entrepreneurial city in the Danish context.

Slightly further afield, Dannestam (2008) has looked at entrepreneurialism and local politics through the lens of cultural political economy, with a reference point in Malmö, Sweden. She herself points out the lack of studies of entrepreneurialism and Scandinavian cities, noting a tendency to focus on welfare policies. This is a resonant critique, and I would add that many of those studies which do exist of entrepreneurialism and neoliberal governance in Denmark place this in a dichotomy against the more traditional welfare roles of local governance. This is an interesting and pertinent area of study, however it does have the side effect that the manner in which Scandinavian cities are entrepreneurial receives less singular attention.

Literature on the entrepreneurial city raises the issue that forces of neoliberalism are coercive, forcing urban governance into competitive situations with regard to both the organisation of governance practices and the types of projects which are carried out. This literature, as is the case with much of the empirical work from Denmark, also raises the issue of the negative implications of such a mode of urban governance. This is particularly notable in the creation of a dichotomy between neoliberalism and social welfare. This is a somewhat polarised debate. The Danish research also reinforces the tendency to focus on the large city or the well-known capital, which resonates with arguments I will make about the importance of the small city in urban studies in chapter three.

### *Neoliberalism and Context*

A final significant area of discussion in literature on neoliberalism is related to the potential importance of context. This is particularly notable in terms of the idea of 'varieties' of neoliberalism. Larner (2003) fears that neoliberalism has become the 'new globalisation', in terms of being an homogeneous explanatory term for economic restructuring. This is part of an understanding of neoliberalism as "highly uneven, both socially and geographically", which has "varied significantly across spatial scales and among each of the major supraregional zones of the world economy" (Brenner & Theodore 2002:3). Peck & Tickell discuss the spatial aspects of neoliberalism, and emphasise a need to look at "local peculiarities" as well as "generic features" (2002:388) of neoliberalism. Peck (2004) also emphasises how the discussion of neoliberalism has had a tendency to characterise it as a homogenous phenomenon, theorising some kind of global convergence of political economy. Therefore this is a discussion which really focuses on contextualising studies of neoliberalism, instead of using neoliberalism as a sweeping and generalised term to describe a variety of different phenomena in very different contexts.

Larner (2003) calls for three changes to the study of 'neoliberalism' - greater focus on the networks which facilitate the global spread of neoliberal ideas, more

detailed analysis of differing neoliberal ideologies, and greater focus on the techniques of neoliberalism. It is the latter of these, the varieties of neoliberalism, which is interesting here. Peck (2004) emphasises the variegation of neoliberalism between different contexts, stating that there are “no ‘pure’ or paradigmatic neoliberal transitions, but a series of institutionally mediated and geopolitically specific hybrids” (Peck 2004:395). Furthermore he calls for us not to simply acknowledge this variegation, but to actually examine what constitutes these different varieties of neoliberalism. In her research on competitiveness, Bristow (2010) has also emphasised the need for a greater empirical focus on differentiation between competitive-oriented strategies, rather than focusing solely on homogenisation. Therefore this idea, that neoliberalism and competitiveness are not some homogeneous single entity, gives a further argument for the need to study the competitiveness discourse in different contexts and at different scales.

## **Conclusions**

Within this chapter I have conceptualised two different fields of literature related to competitiveness. These were a policy-related literature, which reproduces the idea that ‘competitiveness’ is an inescapable necessity for places, and often that certain types of policies and projects are desirable for places to be competitive. The second field of literature was more critical, focusing on competitiveness as a neoliberal tendency and on entrepreneurial, speculative and economically-oriented policies and projects in cities.

The policy-oriented literature is of interest in the way it seems to proffer certain policy solutions as the way to being competitive, or promote competitiveness through the ranking and benchmarking of places. These types of policy solutions and practices seem to be part of the creation of an understanding of the ‘necessity’ for places to be competitive. Within the critical literature, there are a number of issues which are interesting to take up for further investigation. A point which is highlighted in discussions of inter-urban competition and entrepreneurial cities is

the potentially coercive force of neoliberalism. Another issue is the focus on 'varieties of neoliberalism', which posits that neoliberalism is contextually created in different sites and at different scales. This creates fundamental problems for many of the ideas in the policy-oriented literature, as it implies that places cannot be directly compared and solutions cannot be generalised because of the importance of context.

Within the analysis a focus on varieties of competitiveness is manifested in two distinct ways. Firstly there is the Danish context, and the question as to whether there is a 'Danish variety' of competitiveness. Secondly there is the small city context, which I will conceptualise in the next chapter, as well as this being the context of the case study in the analysis. The importance of context in this thesis is also reinforced in the research approach in chapter four.

A final point which arises in this chapter, which I will take as a point of departure in the next chapter, relates to the scope of current research on competitiveness and themes linked to it. Much of this work is fairly generally based, and the empirical reference points which are used tend to be large and well-known cities. Competitiveness has also been extensively studied at a regional level, however, the small city is an entity which has not really come into focus when investigating competitiveness. Within Denmark, the focus on small cities has tended to lie within the policy-oriented literature, suggesting ways in which such cities can 'survive'. This demonstrates that the small city is subject to the discussions in the policy-oriented literature, and therefore it is unlikely that it is immune to the potential problems raised in the critical literature. As I will discuss further in the next chapter, there is a gap for greater empirical study of competitiveness in the small city, as well as the consideration of the small city as an urban entity in its own right.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **SMALL AND ORDINARY CITIES**

### **Introduction**

Small cities are not ignored in urban research, however often when they are used as a unit of study they are framed as being important in a mainly empirical manner. This makes the 'small city' a delimitation, rather than a conscious focus of the research. For example, a study carried out by ESPON highlights the apparent importance of small and medium-sized towns, based on the idea that spatially and numerically these cities exist throughout Europe (ESPON 2006). Here 'small' and 'medium' are quantitative delimitations, which in some contexts is a valid and useful view to take. I would like to take a more targeted view of smallness, trying to understand the dynamics of competitiveness in the small city in particular. I am aiming to place the small city in focus in a manner which is greater than an empirical delimitation, investigating competitiveness in this type of city in particular. The implication of this focus is that I am regarding the competitive small city as something potentially different to the 'competitive city' as it has been studied previously. As discussed in the previous chapter, the

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majority of research on urban competitiveness, and furthermore on urban competitiveness in Denmark, focuses on larger cities. Local government in small cities is also exposed to the potentially coercive pressures of competitiveness as discussed in the previous chapter, yet there is little focus on critical studies of competitiveness within this context. This also relates to the point about 'varieties' of neoliberalism, in that competitiveness is not necessarily homogeneous across all types of cities.

In this chapter I will examine in particular two different perspectives in urban studies, both of which advocate the study of different types of cities to the norm. The first of these is the 'ordinary cities' perspective, developed particularly by Robinson (2006) as a contribution to postcolonial urban studies. This may at first not seem especially promising as an approach to a study of competitiveness and a small city in Denmark, but the inspiration of widening the net of urban theory is significant. The second of these perspectives is more explicitly related to my study, being the development of a 'small cities' research agenda, particularly by Bell & Jayne (2006) and others. This is an agenda which places a greater focus on the small city, but at times it is more related to the policy-oriented type literature I discussed in the previous chapter. These two perspectives, on ordinary and small cities, highlight both the importance of studying different types of cities, but also the potential for taking more critical perspectives on small cities, rather than focusing on narrow modes of development.

### **Ordinary Cities**

A body of literature which has taken the agenda of 'widening the net' of urban theory is that on 'ordinary cities', a conceptualisation introduced by Amin & Graham (1997), but which has been developed furthest by Robinson (2002; 2006; 2008). The starting point for this debate is the recognition of both the limited range of cities which are studied, and also the reductionist manner in which the city is often viewed. Briefly put, this is a particular stance which advocates looking at cities as complex multi-faceted entities, rather than prioritising

particular cities or development sectors in urban theory. The concept reacts against some of the most common ways of theorising cities, choosing instead to view all cities as 'ordinary' in a hope this can provide a greater variety in urban theory and also a greater range of choices for policy-makers constructing a city's future. The 'ordinary city' is not a perspective which refers directly to small or unknown cities, rather it is a theoretical positioning, a different way of viewing all cities in a more equal light.

Amin & Graham introduced this concept, and grounded it in the concern that "[t]oo often single cities - most recently, Los Angeles - are wheeled out as paradigmatic cases, alleged conveniently to encompass all urban trends everywhere" (1997:411). The idea of a particular city as a 'paradigm' is also addressed by Beauregard (2003), who has approached the issue in quite a different way, through concern for what he sees as the excessive use of superlatives in academic work on urban issues. He refers to the 'Los Angeles school', associated with the work of Dear, Davis and Soja, and others, as particular culprits in this respect. Beauregard views this to be an epistemological problem in the understanding of certain cities as typifying or leading all urban trends. For example, through discussing Los Angeles as 'the pinnacle' of some urban trend, one implies that all other types of cities are on an evolutionary path towards this state. Brenner (2003) joins in this discussion, pointing to the reductionism which also takes place in this type of urban theory, placing certain trends and certain cities at the heart of what it is to be urban.

This practice of putting, often major cities, forward as 'the' example of certain trends is also part of the concern that Amin & Graham (1997) have expressed, however they are not just looking at the (mis)use of particular cities. Amin & Graham are also concerned about the way in which certain sectors, for example culture, are used to typify the city, or are viewed as the only or most important economic base. Such representations of the city emphasise their own "ingredients" (1997:416) for urban 'success', however they are simultaneously only "partial representations" (1997:416) of urbanism. This is a point which resonates with the neoliberal fixation on 'strategic projects' (as mentioned in chapter two), which places a central focus on projects such as waterfront redevelopments, new



urban districts and large cultural projects. Amin & Graham (1997) end their article by making a claim for more complex understandings of the city, viewing the city as ‘multiplex’. This understanding involves conceptualising the city as being embodied by a complex range of sectors and problems, rather than pinpointing individual points or projects as ‘the’ problem or ‘the’ solution.

The concept of the ‘ordinary city’ has been furthest developed by Robinson, who has also taken the concept in a slightly new direction, situating it in a postcolonial literature. Robinson begins by stating that there are “a large number of cities around the world which do not register on intellectual maps that chart the rise and fall of global and world cities” (2002:531). This statement reveals both Robinson’s interest in cities outside those normally or often used in urban theory, and also her interest in how these ‘other’ cities relate to the global and world cities discourse in particular. She chooses to refer to this discourse as a “regulating fiction” (Robinson 2002:545) for cities in the developing world, providing policy-makers with an unnecessarily narrow range of policy options.

Robinson is generally concerned not just about urban theory, but about the implications of urban theory for urban policy-making, linking these two areas in her work. Her general argument is that the limited, Westernised nature of urban theory provides a partial explanation of urban trends and processes, and in turn this leads to a limited range of policy choices, particularly in cities in the developing world which have the double-disadvantage of often being expected to emulate the ‘success’ of Western cities. She also refers to the extent to which some urban scholars have attempted to rank and hierarchise cities, and how this has “substantial consequences for the direction of urban policy in a competitive neoliberal economic environment” (Robinson 2008:75). At one point she goes as far to say that if the global ambitions of policy makers are to be “downplayed”, then “urban theorists need to offer an alternative rubric for urban development to that of GAWC [*global and world cities*] approaches, which implicitly encourage such competitive behaviour” (Robinson 2008:76). These examples show again the idea of a fairly direct coercion for policy-makers, who are being presented with a limited range of policy options. In line with this causality, she believes that a wider picture of urban theory “could stimulate the search for more imaginative

strategies for thinking about urban development at the city scale and counter some of the excesses of policy advice fixated on inter-city competitiveness and global processes” (Robinson 2008:86).

It may seem incongruous to refer to a postcolonial/developmental literature in a study focused on small cities in Denmark. It is worth noting that there may be implications of using such an agenda in a Western context, and as Ward (2010) noted in regard to his own work, this is another study of the Western context, so in many ways does not contribute to the cosmopolitanism which Robinson is seeking in urban theory. However it does contribute to a widening in terms of moving the focus away from major, large and global cities. Furthermore this perspective on cities and urbanism generally, as having more facets than competition and growth, is resonant with my concerns about local government in small cities.

The ordinary cities literature offers a variety of pertinent perspectives to this thesis. Firstly, it is against the reduction of the city, and the conceptualisation of successful urbanisation, to economic perspectives and to particular ‘paradigmatic’ cities. Secondly, the ordinary cities perspective is critical of the limitations that this reductionism apparently leads to in policy-making in cities.

## **The Small City**

Bell & Jayne (2006, 2009) and Jayne *et al.* (2010) have been working in recent years on developing a research agenda surrounding small cities. They also make the observation that small cities are overlooked in urban theory, stating that they are “[c]aught between the bigness of the global metropolis dominating global flows of capital, culture and people, and the openness of the rural, small cities are faced with a problem of definition and redefinition, caught between bulking up and staying small” (2006:2). The dearth of specific studies of small cities mean that “we don’t yet have to hand wholly appropriate ways to understand what small cities are, what smallness and bigness mean, how small cities fit or don’t fit into

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the ‘new urban order’” (2006:2). Therefore Bell & Jayne are making the tentative proposition that the small city is something different, or at the very least, it has not been studied enough on its own terms to understand yet whether or not it is something different. They are interested in understanding “the ways that small cities conflict with a particular mindset about urbanity” (Bell & Jayne 2009). ‘Small’ cities seem to contradict what the urban is, as growth and therefore a city’s size is often seen as the measure of its success.

In the previous chapter, the idea of ‘varieties of neoliberalism’ was introduced. This posited that neoliberalism is not a monolithic entity, spreading around the world in a single form. Rather it is being produced, reproduced and adapted at various sites and scales, and in each case in a particular contextual form. My contention was that it was interesting to study competitiveness at a different site to previous literature, the small city. If there is any veracity in Bell & Jayne’s idea that the small city is a different urban form to the big city, then this makes this an even more pertinent site at which to examine competitiveness.

In Bell & Jayne’s (2006) work they have two particular concerns. The first is regarding policy transfer, a field which is gaining more attention today at the inter-urban level (e.g. McCann 2011). Bell & Jayne (2006) are looking at this kind of transfer in terms of “big-city policies and ideas in small-city context”, a situation in which they have observed that “lofty ideals and policy promises are translated into ineffectual practical outcomes as a result of a variety of local cultural factors such as staunch localism, conservatism, risk aversion, traditionalism and lack of ambition” (2006:1). Therefore Bell & Jayne are problematising inter-urban policy transfer from larger cities to smaller, seeing this as something which does not ‘work’ due to what could be summed up as parochialism at the level of the smaller city.

Bell & Jayne’s (2006) second concern is similar, but more normative, as they ask the question “how are small cities to find a place for themselves, find their ‘Unique Selling Point’ (USP), tap into tradable capital, given the emphasis on the *bigness* of cities as their defining feature” (2006:2, original emphasis). The question of the ‘place’ of the small city is one that has been addressed by a number of different

scholars, however at times this type of literature risks falling into precisely one of the traps which Amin & Graham (1997) noted in their original work on the ordinary city, that of economic reductionism. Certain sectors, with culture being the notable example, are often emphasised, with the normative proposition being that a small city can 'survive' by creating cultural attractions, festivals or the like. Garrett-Petts & Dubinsky (2005) have taken the theme of "smaller-scale cultural development" (2005:1) as central in their studies of a small city in Canada, with the conviction that 'culture' needs to be reconsidered when discussing the small city. They deem this to be the case because of issues such as preserving the 'downtown', linking to local history, drawing the local community into development, which can all take on a different character in small cities. This type of study also shows the focus on specific modes of development in the small city. This focus on 'unique selling points' also resonates with the policy-oriented competitiveness literature which I conceptualised in chapter two. There is again a chance that by placing one's focus here, the idea of the 'necessity' for a small city to be competitive is accepted without question.

The small cities research agenda developed by Bell & Jayne is of resonance with my work, but it is not an agenda I wish to take up uncritically. The general idea of looking at different types of cities, which was also something I take from the ordinary cities approach, is also present here. Furthermore the idea of looking at the small city as a particular type of urbanity is also important, as this is a way of conceptualising the small city without assuming the trends and processes will simply be micro-versions of what is going on in larger cities. This agenda remains, however, in a fairly policy-orientated tradition, typified by the idea of finding the 'place' of small cities in economic development. There seems to be potential for a more critical study of the small city than this.

### **Small City - Small Minds?**

The question of the actors in a small city is an interesting one, both in terms of the literature on competitiveness discussed in the last chapter, and in terms of the

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ordinary cities and small cities perspectives introduced in this chapter. Actors in urban governance have been referred to at various points, but they generally seem to have been 'disenfranchised', in terms of their responsibility for the direction of development in cities.

The entrepreneurial cities perspective often seems to paint a picture of cities being 'forced' to compete with each other, and in this neoliberal system, there being a limited range of policy choices for urban governance. This is similar to the idea from Robinson (2006) that a limited scope of urban theory meant that policy-makers were faced with a limited range of choices in urban policy. A neoliberal system of inter-urban competition, and also the focus of urban theory generally, are being 'blamed' for the repetitiveness of policies and strategies in cities today. In these somewhat simplified accounts, actors seem to be stuck in a system beyond their control.

In the small cities work, Bell & Jayne (2006) referred to the parochialism often held by actors in small cities. For them, this was one of the reasons that 'big-city policies' would often not work in the small city. Once again, the responsibility is being largely taken out of the hands of the actors in urban governance. Although here it is not a wider political economic or theoretical system which is being held accountable, the actors are still being expected to act in a certain way as smallness is viewed as something in the 'mind'.

I am interested in examining these propositions, in considering whether local government in the 'competitive small city' is in such a hopeless situation. In the last chapter, I referred to the work of Peck (2002) on the geographies of neoliberalism. He contended that neoliberalism was not simply produced at the macro-scale, but rather was simultaneously produced at the macro and micro scale. To transfer that to this discussion, it would seem possible that actors in small cities are not simply 'consuming' the discourse of competitiveness, but are also agents in (re)producing the discourse.

## **Danish Small Cities**

There is a variety of work on small cities in Denmark and economic development, however it tends again to fall within the policy-oriented tradition which I discussed in the beginning of chapter two. Small cities are constructed as places which have to find ways to 'survive'. For example, Allingham (2009) uses this very language to discuss European small cities, examining how cities use branding and experiential strategies for 'survival'.

Lorentzen focuses on a similar topic, the use of 'experiences' by cities "outside the centres of growth" (2009:829) as a path to economic development. With a particular focus on culture, Lorentzen refers to experiences as a "'window of opportunity' for small cities and cities in industrial decline" (2009:840). This article is similar to Bell & Jayne's (2006) desire to find the way in which small cities can place themselves, seeking to find 'solutions' for urban development, taking as unquestioned that "places compete on the 'global catwalk' to attract citizens, tourists and firms and they do so by developing their qualities" (Lorentzen 2009:843).

This demonstrates that the common focus on small cities is in terms of finding ways these cities can promote economic growth, or even finding ways they can 'survive'. At times small cities are even promoted as better than big cities in terms of certain types of economic growth. For example Lorentzen & Hansen (2009) discuss the findings of an INTERREG project on small and medium-sized historic towns, with the conclusion that "these towns bear a particular potential for stimulating regional competition through supplementing culture and leisure functions, which can serve urban development in economic as well as non-economic terms" (2009:821). They however also discuss that large cities can have "a competitive edge over small cities and peripheral places" (2009:822) due to "economies of scope and scale of the offer of leisure activities" (2009:822). Once again a language of competition is evident, as cities need to "keep up" (2009:823) with each other.

Sørensen *et al.* (2010) have also written about the ‘experience economy’ and ‘creativity’ in small cities in Denmark. This is yet another example of the majority of writing which focuses on such cities - analyses of, or attempts to place frameworks on, small cities which are deemed to be potential sources of growth. They do however point out that in Denmark the “‘creative class’ discourse is currently transferred to a small-town context and infiltrated with another influential discourse - that of the ‘experience economy’” (2010:177). They emphasise that these discourses are being used in small towns “to stimulate settlement and business development” (2010:177). In their article, Sørensen *et al.* (2010) investigate “whether small towns, can successfully attract the creative class and initiate business development by developing their experience economy” (2010:177). Therefore once again, in a similar manner to the articles by Allingham (2009), Lorentzen (2009) and Lorentzen & Hansen (2009), this article is placing a focus on the ways in which a particular discourse of development can be used to generate growth in small cities. Whilst Sørensen *et al.* (2010) conclude that there are limits to the use of the creative class/experience economy discourses as development tools in small cities, they also state that “such strategies appear to be a necessary evil for towns if they are not to be left behind in terms of development” (2010:200).

‘Creativity’ has gained considerable focus in Denmark, and Andersen *et al* (2009) have studied the ‘creative class’ in a Danish context, examining both how Florida’s (2002) findings hold up in Denmark as well as the types of strategies which regions and municipalities can use to attract the creative class. They take the discourse of global competition as a starting point for their work, justifying its importance:

“What is it, that should secure Denmark’s future competitiveness? We have to, just like many other Western countries that must find new standpoints in global competition, constantly create *new* knowledge: in other words, we have to *innovate*. Innovation is the ongoing creation of new background knowledge and new principles, but innovation is also the creation of new, saleable products. And it is with innovation that *creativity* comes into the picture.”<sup>1</sup> (Andersen *et al* 2009:17, original emphasis)

Andersen *et al* (2009) emphasise particular manners of growth and development, emphasising recreation, culture and urban space, amongst other things. As well as ranking all Danish cities in terms of the proportion of the 'creative class' that live there, they discuss different types of cities which can attract the creative class. The smallest of cities are considered in terms of a necessity to simply 'grow' "without necessarily having a fixed focus or a fixed profile"<sup>2</sup> (Andersen *et al* 2009:87). Slightly larger 'small cities' should on the other hand focus on 'everyday' in terms of "small frequent experiences", and growth which "creates the necessary critical mass for specialised services and culture offerings such as health food shops, sushi restaurants and experimental theatre"<sup>3</sup> (Andersen *et al* 2009:87). Therefore this offers yet another example of how the small city is conceptualised in Danish research, in terms of a place which simply needs to find the 'right' strategy in order to grow and compete.

The 'creative class' and the 'experience economy' have in particular made their mark both in Danish academia and policy-making, and as Sørensen *et al.* (2010) have observed, these concepts are often blended together in the policy-making scene. These are examples of two particular modes of development which are being hailed as important for the development of small cities. Generally the use of language in Danish research on small cities and urban development also positions these cities in a certain way - as potential failures, as places which are in need of regeneration and as places which must take certain courses of action lest they lose their way in a greater race for economic development. Here I recall the comments of Schoenberger (1998) and Lovering (1999) in the previous chapter, that the language of choice of the researcher plays a part in creating the 'reality' of what they are studying. It seems that in this case, the language of Danish research on small cities is playing a part in placing these cities in a neoliberal competitive game. Furthermore, as I stated in the previous section, there remains a significant gap for studying the small city and its development in a more critical manner.

Within this thesis the 'small city' is how I am characterising my case study. Although it is somewhat meaningless to equate the word 'small' with a number, the 'small city' in question (which will be introduced in greater detail in the



analytical chapters) has a population of about 50 000, although is the central city in a municipality of about 105 000 people. To some, this city, the 10<sup>th</sup> biggest in Denmark, would not be considered 'small'. It is, however, a city without any significant national importance, and is barely known outside of Denmark. This seems to be precisely the type of city which policy-oriented and small cities literature is concerned, and in that way it is an interesting case study for such a critical perspective.

## Conclusions

To recap, in this chapter I have introduced two perspectives in urban theory, both of which are concerned with broadening the types of cities which are theorised. The first of these is the ordinary cities perspectives, as proposed by Amin & Graham (1997) and developed by Robinson (2006), which is concerned with both the limited value of focusing on certain cities, certain sectors, as well as the potential of limiting the 'choices' of policy-makers. The second of these perspectives was focused on small cities (Bell & Jayne 2006), with a similar agenda of analysing a different 'type' of city to the norm, however with the limitation of a focus on finding certain ways for these cities to develop.

In this chapter I have discussed the possibility that the small city is a different kind of place to the larger city, where a discourse such as competitiveness potentially will take a different form. Bell & Jayne (2006), and others, have put focus on the small city in their recent work, posing just this hypothesis, and arguing for the study of the small city in its own right. The major focus of much work on the small city, also within the Danish context, seems to be on the search for particular policy solutions or 'unique selling points' (Bell & Jayne 2006) for their further development. This type of work can be mainly characterised as policy-oriented, according to the dichotomy I discussed in chapter two. Critical writing on the small city seems to be few and far between. This is a gap I would like to address in this thesis, as it seems to me that looking critically at the small city offers greater potential for understanding whether policy-making in small

cities is really the copycat and predecided game it is suggested to be, or whether it is in fact more complex. Looking at this question opens up the potential for asking whether small city policy-makers are compelled to compete, or if the picture is in fact more complex.

Investigating these points requires a specific research approach, which is what I will assemble in the next chapter. Critically this involves unpacking the understandings of competitiveness in the small city, as well as analysing the extent to which competitiveness is naturalised in the small city. I will approach my study of competitiveness in the small city through a research approach based on discourse, which contributes to both the critical approach and to investigating the idea of a wider structure within which actors define their actions. This research approach is where I will turn now.



# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **RESEARCH APPROACH**

### **Introduction**

I have argued in the preceding chapters that competitiveness is generally accepted and unquestioned in urban planning and policy-making, and that a critical approach can be used to investigate this. A critical discursive approach is particularly appropriate in terms of studying an idea which often goes unquestioned, and also in terms of studying the process which results in this status. Therefore a discourse approach is broadly suitable for studying how 'competitiveness' has become so important in small cities, as well as how it is understood in this type of city in particular. It is this type of approach, and how it can be used analytically, that I will discuss in this chapter.

My initial interest in this topic was piqued by language, and the way in which competitiveness seemed to be used in debates on planning and spatial planning, therefore it is appropriate that the research approach takes a departure point in language. As I will discuss in this chapter, this is not a linguistic-discursive approach, instead I am focusing on a wider conceptualisation of discourse and a

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research methodology which goes beyond the written text. The discursive approach which I assemble helps to interpret the understanding of competitiveness in the small city and the process which lies behind this discourse being unquestioned, or as I will come to refer to it, 'institutionalised'. The discursive approach gives me the possibility of critically deconstructing competitiveness in urban planning and policy-making, examining the process of change by which competitiveness has come to take such a central role, as well as how it is understood.

This discursive approach is related to a critical stance. I am interested in questioning the dominant position of competitiveness in spatial planning and policy-making. Through viewing competitiveness as a discourse, this gives an angle on questioning it instead of regarding it as an 'objective fact'. The critical approach is common to the different forms of discourse analysis which I discuss in this chapter. It is important to note from the outset that I am referring to a generally 'critical approach' through the investigation of discourses, rather than to the specific 'critical discourse analysis' school promoted by Fairclough (1995) and others. This generally critical approach is part of the different perspectives on discourse I will introduce in this chapter. For example Hajer sees it as a characteristic of discourse analysis in that it generally takes a "critical stance towards 'truth' and puts emphasis on the communications through which knowledge is exchanged" (Hajer & Versteeg 2005:176). Schön makes a similar point, highlighting the role of critical discursive research in examining our understanding of the world, with the realisation that we are not working with "reality" but with various ways of making sense of reality" (1979:149).

This critical stance is also related to the non-prescriptive nature of this thesis. It is not my intention to produce policy 'solutions', rather I wish to examine the landscape of planning and policy-making in a critical manner. This is something which is particularly evident in the use of discourse analysis as a critical tool, tracing the development and understanding of discourses. The critical stance is a commonality between the discursive approaches I discuss in this chapter. It is related to a view of the 'setting' of policy problems as just as important as the 'solving' of these problems (Hajer 1995; Rein & Schön 1996), which will be

discussed in greater depth later in this chapter, as well as an idea that the role of the researcher is, and should be, different to that of the policy-maker. This view is also connected to a wider epistemology of social science as a critical examination of society, rather than as a 'natural science' which should produce prescriptive laws (Flyvbjerg 2001).

This chapter is structured as follows. I will briefly discuss the idea of a 'research approach', and introduce a broad overview of discourse theory and analysis. I will then explain and assemble the three major concepts which I will use in the analysis of my case, these being story-lines, metaphors and institutionalisation. This will be followed by a discussion of narratives and the case study, both of which are important to the general approach in this thesis and in terms of the role of the researcher within an interpretative study. Within my consideration of the case study I will also introduce the specific sources of evidence to be analysed in my investigation of the competitiveness discourse. I conclude the chapter by reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the research approach. Altogether this chapter will pave the way for the analytical part of the thesis.

## **Discursive Approaches**

My research approach builds upon several understandings of discourses and discourse analysis, as well as narratives and case studies. By using this discursive approach I am working with a conceptualisation of discourse which is wider than texts. This links to my use of a case study methodology, which also illuminates the importance of the context and practices surrounding the discourse of competitiveness.

In my research approach I am focusing particularly on the work of Hajer (1995), whose 'brand' of discourse analysis has proved popular in the social sciences, as well as Schön's (1993) concept of 'metaphors', and a general narrative-based and case study approach (Throgmorton 1996; Flyvbjerg 1998; Jensen 2007; Czarniawska 2010). These discursive approaches are then linked to a case study

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methodology, which is complementary in terms of its focus on the context within which the competitiveness discourse is situated, and the range of data which is used as evidence.

‘Discourse’ is a term which requires some defining, as it has been a popular focus in social science in recent decades, however there is by no means one single discursive tradition or approach. Furthermore, matters are complicated by the term often being “used rather casually” (Hastings 1999:9). A crude division can be made between ‘discourse theory’ and ‘discourse analysis’, broadly as a theory and a method, although in practice these are intertwined. Discourse theory generally refers to the more ontological and epistemological understandings of what discourse is. Discourse analysis on the other hand has a greater connection to the methodological side of research, and this is perhaps where many can be tempted to employ discourse analysis without a grounding in discourse theory.

Phillips & Jørgensen generally define discourse as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world” (2002:1). This is a fairly simple definition, but it does highlight that discourse is not ‘just’ a manner of speech, but it is also linked to understanding. This definition also points to the usefulness of a discourse approach for studying a turn of phrase such as ‘competitiveness’, as it provides a manner of uncovering the understandings linked to this use of language. Harvey places greater focus on the power relations which are embedded in discourse, stating that we “use discourse to persuade ourselves and others to a certain way of understanding (and acting towards) a subject matter we regard as important” (1996:77). Here Harvey is acknowledging the power aspect of discourse, highlighting that use of language is not neutral, and is used by certain actors to persuade other actors. Furthermore Harvey (1996), like Phillips & Jørgensen (2002), is highlighting the link between the way one talks about the world and the way one understands the world, and also the way in which one acts. Therefore it is important to emphasise that a discursive approach is not limited to the understanding of isolated uses of language within written documents, rather it is an approach which takes its point of departure in language in order to uncover the understandings of and actions within the world.

ÓTuathail (2002) conceptualises discourse analysis as being possible at three 'levels' - the macro, meso and micro levels. He himself acknowledges that these are fairly crude, and "do not capture the range and complexity of some theorists" (2002:606). They do however provide a useful way of thinking about the different modes of discourse analysis, as well as their differing connections to discourse theory. The macro-level perspective includes work of "philosophical ambition and wide historical sweep" (2002:606), such as Foucault's work on genealogies of knowledge, subjectification, knowledge and power. Therefore this is a form of discourse analysis with a strong sense of discourse theory embedded within it, and ambitions to forward philosophical thinking about discourse and society. The meso-level perspective on the other hand has more modest ambitions, focusing on "the everyday working of discourse in public policy and social debate" (2002:606). Here the sense of discourse theory is not abandoned, however the aim of discourse analysis is somewhat different, focusing on connections to policy rather than philosophical considerations, in terms of "how discourse helps produce 'common sense' understandings and pragmatic 'storylines' that condition and enable routine policy practices" (2002:606). The final level of discourse analysis is more based in linguistics than the broader social sciences, in terms of investigating the linguistic minutiae of a text. Some researchers working in this tradition make links to the wider context and wider societal questions (e.g. Fairclough 2000), however many remain within the linguistic analysis of discourse.

The focus of the discourse approach in this thesis is situated at the meso-level. I am neither focusing on the linguistic construction of texts, nor on the wider historical, societal and philosophical implications of discourse. Rather this discourse approach is in between, starting from written and spoken texts but considering them in their wider context, and investigating how the discourse of competitiveness has become a 'common sense' part of policy-making. This relates to the fundamental interests of discourse theory, in terms of uncovering the way in which this discourse has shaped policy understanding and courses of action in planning. This also relates to the wider methodology of the case study, focusing on a variety of sources of evidence and recognising the 'blurring' between a



phenomenon and the context it is situated within. This latter point is one I will discuss later in this chapter.

### **Story-Lines**

The first analytical concept which I will introduce in this chapter is that of ‘story-lines’, as used by Hajer (1995). Hajer’s (1995) early work is based on a case study of environmental policy-making in the Netherlands and the UK. He claims a philosophical foundation in the work of Foucault and Billig & Harré, yet his most notable contribution is probably his use of a number of analytical concepts in his analysis, such as discourse coalitions and story-lines. Through this range of concepts, Hajer was able to produce a particular interpretation of environmental policy-making, highlighting the way in which the discursive creation of the problem led to certain policy actions.

Although Hajer’s discourse analysis focuses on a variety of elements, I am interested primarily in a small number of the devices which he uses in his analytical approach. It could be that some of the popularity of Hajer’s take on discourse analysis is down to the vocabulary he has developed to describe his analytical objects, and to argue for the way in which discourse is used. The ideas of ‘metaphors’ and ‘story-lines’ are of particular interest to me here, and I will begin with discussing story-lines. Initially ‘metaphors’ and ‘story-lines’ sound like terms from a purely linguistic discourse analysis, however Hajer interprets these more widely.

Hajer defines the story-line as “a generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena” (1995:56). I will discuss narratives in greater detail later in the chapter, however here I should state that the story-line has more complexity than the metaphor, which can be summed up in a single word or phrase. Story-lines can create a sense of order for those using them, in that they “suggest unity in the bewildering variety of separate discursive component parts of a problem” (Hajer

1995:56). In this way, story-lines are a simplified and more comprehensible understanding of a problem. Story-lines, with their multiple elements, also help in the “creation of a social and moral order in a given domain” (Hajer 1995:64). Within this thesis, story-lines provide a specific way of interpreting how competitiveness is understood in the small city. Story-lines are also related to the analytical concept of ‘metaphors’.

## **Metaphors**

Metaphors are used by actors to stand in for complex problems and to signify greater issues. The idea of the ‘metaphor’ is in fact one Hajer borrows from Schön, to explain devices which “provide a common ground between various discourses” (Hajer 1995:62). Metaphors, like story-lines, are simplified reinterpretations, “filling in the gaps and ambivalences that were left by the original text” (Hajer 1995:62). Although metaphors and story-lines have similar functions, metaphors are based in specific words or phrases used in written and spoken texts, whereas story-lines are wider interpretations of the simplified themes in discursive texts and practices. In a practical sense, this means that metaphors can be identified relatively easily in analysis, whereas story-lines need to be interpreted through a wider process of data analysis, moving between different sources. This is a point which will be elaborated further in the discussion of the sources of evidence later in this chapter.

To discuss further what a discursive metaphor is, Schön describes the ‘generative metaphor’ as “‘carrying over’ of frames or perspectives from one domain of experience to another” (1993:137). Therefore here a metaphor is a way of viewing the world, in particular using expressions and understandings that are familiar from one domain, and transferring this to another domain. Schön (1993) describes this process of the transfer of the interpretation of the world in greater detail, using the example of a pump and a paintbrush. He describes a situation in which a group of researchers were able to improve the design of a paintbrush with synthetic fibres through the generative metaphor of a ‘paintbrush as a pump’.

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This meant that “everything one knows about pumping has the potential of being brought into play” (1993:141) when discussing painting, and the group gradually “*mapped* their descriptions of ‘pump’ and ‘pumping’ onto their initial descriptions of ‘paintbrush’ and ‘painting’” (1993:142). As they are developed, metaphors provide a “sense of the obviousness of what is wrong and what needs fixing” (Schön 1993:148). It is important to note that metaphors do not provide us with a ‘better’ understanding than that we previously had, rather they mean that we simply understand a problem “differently than before” (Schön 1993:148).

Within this thesis I am using the term ‘metaphor’ to refer more specifically to what Schön (1993) defines as ‘surface metaphors’, that is the more specific metaphors which are actually used by policy-makers and in policy documents, and which help simplify an understanding of a problem. Along with story-lines, these metaphors help interpret how competitiveness is understood in the case study, and they also contribute to the analysis of the discursive process of ‘institutionalisation’.

### **Institutionalisation of Discourses**

The discursive concepts which I have discussed so far, metaphors and story-lines, are in themselves all fairly ‘static’ concepts. They provide ways of understanding how competitiveness is interpreted by policy actors, however the study of these alone produces a snapshot of a discourse at a particular moment in time. As I am also interested in how ‘competitiveness’ reached its dominant position in policy making and planning, a study of change is also necessary. Discursive processes are important in terms of studying the change in discourses over time, rather than their status at a particular moment. In particular, I am focusing on the concept of ‘institutionalisation’ which Hajer (1995) introduces, which helps me examine the way in which ‘competitiveness’ has reached the privileged position I view it to have.

Hajer (1995) in fact focuses on two concepts, the 'structuration' and 'institutionalisation' of a discourse. Discourse structuration is the condition whereby "the credibility of actors in a given domain requires them to draw on the ideas, concepts, and categories of a given discourse" (Hajer 1995:60). This is difficult to determine entirely, however the important point is that structuration of a discourse is broadly related to its continued use in a debate, and furthermore, the necessity of its use to create legitimacy for an argument. Hajer uses the example of the use of a discourse by a policy committee as an occurrence of discourse structuration (Hajer 1995:163).

Discourse institutionalisation is a similar process of change to discourse structuration, however the end-state of a discourse being 'institutionalised' is different, in that a "given discourse is translated into concrete policies (i.e. shifting investment in mobility from road to rail) and institutional arrangements (introduction of multi-value auditing, or the restructuring of old departmental divisions)" (Hajer 1995:61). This is therefore a greater degree of 'acceptance' than with discourse structuration, in that here the discourse is being explicitly used as a foundation for policies and for institutional arrangements. This is also somewhat easier to research than 'structuration', at least in terms of a historical approach based on policies and strategies, as discourses embedded in these are inherently institutionalised according to Hajer's definition.

In Hajer's (1995) own study of the story-line of 'ecological modernization' in the UK, he points out several examples which prove the institutionalisation of this discourse. These include the introduction of permanent and comprehensive monitoring of air pollution, and the acceptance of the 'ecological modernization' discourse by major actors in the debate (Hajer 1995:161). Hajer also suggests that perhaps the highest level of institutionalisation of a discourse is if it becomes part of a law. This observation is connected to the 'coherence' of a discourse.

One of Hajer's (1995) major points is that a discourse does not have to be coherent to become institutionalised, although this can be linked in some cases, such as the law example, where a discourse is both highly institutionalised and highly coherent. Hajer finds with his study of 'ecological modernization' in the

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Netherlands that the discourse in fact covers over many differences and a general lack of coherence in understanding between different groups of actors.\_

Therefore for a true focus on 'change', it is necessary to not simply look at discourses, metaphors or story-lines as static concepts. It is also necessary to focus on the discursive processes surrounding the creation and recreation of these concepts, which is where institutionalisation comes into play in my analysis.

### **The Discursive Research Approach in this Thesis**

The analytical approach which I use in this thesis is a combination of the three elements which I have presented so far in this chapter. In the introduction I conceptualised my overall research approach as being critical and non-prescriptive. These are threads which permeate the whole approach. I focus on three specific analytical concepts (story-lines, metaphors and institutionalisation), as well as a broader narrative and case study approach, which I will discuss in greater detail in the following sections.

I have summarised the elements of my research approach in table 4.1. This shows the major points which define each of the concepts, as well as the way in which they can be interpreted in an analysis. Within my analysis I will be focusing on story-lines and metaphors to interpret the way in which competitiveness is understood, and in terms of change over time I will be focusing on the process of discourse institutionalisation. This discursive research approach is coupled with a case study and narrative approach, which I will discuss in the following section. The case study approach highlights the broader focus on this discourse of competitiveness within a particular context. This also supports the broader understanding of discourse beyond simply texts, and the links to understandings and practices within that context. The narrative element relates to the important position of the researcher in this type of interpretative research.

As table 4.1 shows, within my case study I will focus on three sources of evidence (documents, interviews and contextual), through which I will identify story-lines,

	Story-Lines	Metaphors	Institutionalisation
	<i>Elements of Understanding Discourses</i>		<i>Discursive Process of Change</i>
<i>Definition</i>	A simplified understanding of problems and solutions in policy-making and planning.	Applying a perspective or frame from one domain to another domain to simplify understanding	Discourse is translated into policies and institutional arrangements.
<i>Key questions</i>	What are the broad themes used to frame competitiveness?	What explicit word or phrases, using perspectives from other domains, are used within competitiveness story-lines?	In what organisational arrangements and practices is the competitiveness discourse reflected?
<b>C a s e   S t u d y   a n d   R e s e a r c h   N a r r a t i v e</b>			
<i>Sources of evidence</i>	Documents, interviews, contextual sources (iterative process)	Documents, interviews (identification of these metaphors)	Documents, interviews, contextual sources (iterative process)

Table 4.1: The Discursive Research Approach, highlighting the Main Analytical Concepts.

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metaphors and the process of institutionalisation. Story-lines are identified in an iterative process through analysing documents and interviews, and with the supporting role of the contextual sources of evidence. Metaphors are perhaps the easiest element to identify, as these are explicit markers used in the documentary and interview evident, where perspectives from one domain are used in the domain of municipal planning and organisation. In that way, metaphors may be markers of a certain story-line, but every story-line does not necessarily encompass these explicit, surface metaphors.

The analysis in chapter five, which focuses on the national level of policy-making in Denmark, is a broad sweep which features points from the entire research approach. This is also based on evidence from interviews and documents. Within this analysis, there is a focus on story-lines, metaphors and institutionalisation of competitiveness in contemporary Danish policy. This is all placed within a broader international context of competitiveness.

The analysis in chapter six focuses on discursive processes, telling the tale of the institutionalisation of the competitiveness discourse in Vejle Municipality's planning over the last thirty years. This is a historical analysis which shows various story-lines which have been important in municipal planning over this period.

The analysis in chapter seven is more focused on the static frames and story-lines of competitiveness across Vejle Municipality today. Here the story-lines and metaphors of competitiveness in the contemporary organisation are examined, leading to a picture of the way in which competitiveness is interpreted across the municipality. The analysis in this chapter is based on all the sources of evidence discussed later in this chapter: documents, interviews and contextual sources.

## **Narratives**

So far in this chapter I have brought together the three analytical concepts which will be key in my analysis, which are story-lines, metaphors and

institutionalisation. Narratives is the next concept I will introduce; however this is of a different character to the former concepts, as it does not provide an analytical device. Rather, narratives are here related to the positionality of the researcher in analysing, interpreting and representing research, including writing style and mode of presentation. Along with the case study, this is an overall concept in this thesis.

The ‘narrative’ is a concept which I have found to be somewhat ambiguous in social science research, in terms of the separation (or not) of the research ‘object’ and the researcher. In that thread, it seems to me that narratives are of interest in terms of the positionality of the researcher, blurring imagined boundaries between the researcher and the research ‘object’. Aside from this point about the positionality of the researcher, there are also two distinct threads of discussing ‘narratives’ in social science. One thread places its focus on the narratives of actors in a certain field, in terms of ‘re-telling’ the stories of these actors. The other thread places more focus on the researcher as the ‘story-teller’, in terms of the narrative being the construct of the researcher rather than something which is identified externally to the researcher. Here I am interested in the latter approach, although it should also be noted that they are not mutually exclusive, and some authors use the term in both ways without always making this distinction clear (e.g. Throgmorton 1996).

Many authors begin their argument for the central placing of the ‘narrative’ and narratology in social science research by referring to them as a natural mode of human communication, for example in terms of ‘telling stories’. Fischer states that narratives are and always have been “the way we make meaning in our lives” (2003:162), a tool for understanding which is familiar from childhood across cultural contexts. In a similar vein, Flyvbjerg (2001) states that narratives are “perhaps our most fundamental form for making sense of experience” (2001:137). Czarniawska (2010) makes a contemporary extension of this historical argument, opposing narratives to “logico-scientific” (2010:59) knowledge, and stating the narrative has greater legitimacy as “the everyday use of the narrative form is all-pervasive” (2010:59).



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These arguments all come from researchers pointing towards a “narrative turn” in the social sciences (Czarniawska 2010:59). Czarniawska (2010) is placing this narrative turn as a particular approach to the social sciences, which is not dissimilar to ideas on ‘problem setting’ rather than ‘problem solving’ in policy-making. She wishes to focus in social science on not just re-telling narratives as a researcher, but on trying to “go further and see how the narratives of practice unfold” (2010:59). This is a significant point to bear in mind when engaging in any kind of narrative-based research; that is the need to do more than ‘simply’ re-tell a story, but to also put focus on understanding how a particular story came to be. This process focus is resonant with the discursive concept of institutionalisation which I discussed above. It also relates to the critical role of the researcher, in terms of the need to unpack concepts and ideas, rather than just describing policies or producing policy ‘solutions’. Czarniawska describes the latter as an attempt to do the same work as practitioners, but “from a disadvantaged position” (2010:59), as the researcher is not necessarily involved in the context to the same degree as the practitioner.

I am, however, sceptical of relying solely on this type of argumentation, as it seems too ‘sweeping’ to state that the narrative is a more ‘natural’ form of communication which therefore has greater legitimacy, as processes of ‘naturalisation’ in another context are precisely what I am questioning in this thesis. In Flyvbjerg’s (1998) Aalborg study, he claims to combine a case study and a narrative methodology in his presentation of this case. Returning to my initial comment on the blurring of the researcher and the research ‘object’, this is an interesting example. Flyvbjerg’s (1998) work in particular links the narrative as a methodology with the researcher’s narrative, that is, the manner in which he as a researcher tells the ‘story’ of his research. Throgmorton’s (1996) work on planning and a power company in the USA is a similar example, in which his research narratives are interwoven with a personal research narrative. Throgmorton (1996) calls planners ‘persuasive storytellers’, but here the researcher is playing this persuasive storytelling role just as well. He refers to this role himself, stating in the conclusion that: “I have sought simply to narrate a persuasive tale that truthfully represents my understanding of planning in general

and Edison's expansion in particular" (Throgmorton 1996:254). This acknowledgement of the 'story-telling role' of the researcher is for me perhaps the strongest argument for using a narrative approach to research. Rather than a radically-different methodology to the discursive approaches I have been discussing, it is a way in which the key role of the researcher in interpreting, formulating and presenting the research is highlighted. It is also linked to the holistic form of a monograph, which is how I have chosen to present this thesis, giving a greater possibility of creating a clear narrative from the research.

The narrative approach highlights the position of the researcher in this type of interpretative research. I am not separated from the research, and it can be both a critique and an advantage that the interpretation of the research is very person dependent. Furthermore the style of writing is part of the creation of the research, rather than a representation of it.

## **The Case Study Methodology**

The case study is an important and complementary part of my research approach, and can be quite strongly linked to the narrative perspective. Whereas the discursive approach, focusing on the elements which I have outlined above, takes a point of departure in texts, the case study approach adds the wider focus on practices and context which makes this a non-linguistic discourse analysis. The case study approach is also linked to the general use of evidence from various sources, related not just to the competitiveness discourse, but also the context of the small city where I am investigating this discourse.

The focus on 'context' is something which the case study methodology has in common with the discursive approaches I have discussed in this chapter. This is acknowledged in different ways by different theorists. Yin (2003) defines case studies by the importance of contextual knowledge. Case studies are used across a variety of disciplines, however in this case I am interested in the in-depth, interpretative case study, which has strong relations to the narrative approach to

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research which I discussed in the previous section. Flyvbjerg's (2007) general approach prioritises contextual knowledge in the social sciences, arguing that this is because "there does not and probably can not exist predictive theory" (2007:392). Czarniawska (2010) expresses a similar conception of the social sciences in her discussion of the narrative approach. The case study as a methodology works from a fundamental epistemology of the significance and inseparability of context from the 'object' of study.

Here I can state that there is a broad conceptualisation of 'context', where context is viewed as a somewhat ephemeral surround to all real-life phenomena. This conceptualisation of context provides the basis of most qualitative case study approaches, in that context is considered so fundamental and important that it cannot be 'separated' from the phenomenon which is being studied (Yin 2003).

For Flyvbjerg (1998), in his aforementioned Aalborg study, the case study is a longitudinal and in-depth study, focusing on qualitative findings and the detailed 'story-telling' of a narrative approach. This is a research tradition which emphasises the in-depth case study, with the argument that an in-depth focus on a single issue in a single city provides a greater understanding of some higher level problematic (e.g. questions of power or democracy) than a different methodology.

In this thesis the case study is of Vejle Municipality, a municipality centred on a small city in Denmark. The majority of the analysis focuses on this case study, however the initial research question also places a focus on the wider Danish context of national policy. This case study was selected because it seemed to stand out in an initial study of municipal websites of Danish small cities, making this an information-oriented rather than random selection (Flyvbjerg 2001). Vejle Municipality stood out as a municipality which seemed to have a strong emphasis on strategies and visions with an ambitious tone. Therefore the case study was chosen not to be typical, but as something of an "extreme" (Flyvbjerg 2001:79) case where the phenomenon of competitiveness was likely to be visible. This 'extreme' categorisation is something I will return to in the conclusions of the thesis.

Within the case study, I have focused on three sources of evidence. The first two of these, documents and interviews, are fairly discrete, and I will describe how I have used them first. I will follow this with the third source of evidence, which I have chosen to call 'contextual evidence'. This is related explicitly to the case study approach, in that I have increased my general familiarity with the case and created a tacit knowledge about the city and the municipality through a variety of other sources, such as first-hand experiences of the city environment, information from the municipal website, and mentions of the city and municipality in the national and local media. This latter form of evidence is not immediately evident in the analytical chapters, however the case study approach lends a certain significance to these types of evidence in terms of the more 'contextual' part of the study. I will now discuss each of these sources of evidence, along with the methods used to gather the data, in greater detail.

### *Document Analysis*

The analysis of documents is the starting point and the basis of the analytical work for this thesis. Documents were analysed in terms of the major story-lines and metaphors which were interpreted within them. The documents in question were mainly official policy documents, strategies and information publications produced by public authorities. Some of these documents were historical, and were analysed together in terms of changing story-lines and the process of institutionalisation, and others were analysed in terms of the current story-lines and metaphors of competitiveness within them.

This document analysis was an ongoing iterative process with the interviews and the contextual sources of evidence, as discussed in the next section. That is, although the document analysis was very much the starting point of the analysis overall, the documents were analysed over a longer period of time and with the evidence from the interviews and contextual sources taken into account.

Access to documents was fairly good, which is related to the fact the document analysis was mostly of policies, strategies and other publically-available

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documents. The contemporary documents related to the national ministries and Vejle Municipality were initially accessed through the internet, the national library and the local library. In the case of the municipality, other publications, particularly strategies from the individual departments, were obtained through the interviews. Furthermore, Vejle Municipality has generally good availability of municipal documentation through their website, including current and some previous plans and strategies, minutes of committee and city council meetings, and itineraries of municipal study tours.

### *Interviews*

The second major source of evidence for the analysis in this thesis is interviews. I carried out 15 interviews in total, with 17 different interviewees, as two people were present on two occasions (the interviewees are listed in the primary sources). 13 of these interviews were in connection with the case study of Vejle Municipality and three of the interviews were related to the national policy-making level. The interviews were carried out at different points from November 2009 until August 2010, either at the offices or homes of the interviewees. The majority of the interviewees were found through general contact via email to their organisations, although a number of the Vejle Municipality interviewees were recommended to me by initial interviewees in the municipality. I broadly attempted to select interviewees from a range of the municipality's departments, related to my initial analysis of documents from these departments. In the case of the national level, the interviewees were again contacted via email, and were representatives of the two ministries on which I focused my document analysis.

All the interviews were semi-structured. This was to allow the interviewees the opportunity to discuss broad issues they found important, rather than following a rigid set of questions. Carrying out the interviews in various stages also allowed a reflective process, meaning that I could adjust questions slightly in different interviews, according to other points I had been investigating or information from previous interviewees. The general themes which were discussed in the different

interviews were related to the themes I deemed important from the initial document analysis. The most problematic of these themes was perhaps the difficulty in discussing the discourse of 'competitiveness' explicitly. Although a majority of the interview themes were implicitly related to 'competitiveness', I also introduced the discourse explicitly at some points. This is a potential issue in that it was me, as the researcher, who was both introducing the term and asserting its importance to the interviewees. This most likely led some interviewees to emphasise its importance, although I still left the questioning open enough that they were free to interpret how they understood and wished to discuss the discourse. This bias is lessened by the overall research approach, which due to the fairly broad conceptualisation of discourse, the use of the word 'competitiveness' by interviewees is not in itself of great significance. The story-lines and institutionalisations of competitiveness could be discussed in interview without direct use of the term 'competitiveness' by the interviewees, meaning that my use of the word does not critically affect my results.

I made the decision prior to beginning the interviews to carry them out in Danish, with the intention of giving my interviewees the freedom of using their native language and the terms and reference points familiar to them. This did however mean that at times I myself, using my second language, had to rephrase and re-explain points to clarify what I meant. In retrospect this seemed to be a good decision, as open misunderstandings were minimal, and I feel that it did give my interviewees the ability to explain their views and thoughts in the way to which they are accustomed. In terms of the analysis, the 'shift' to English occurred in the writing up and presentation of the analysis, with direct quotations translated at this point, rather than translating larger portions of the interviews.

The analysis of the interviews was very much an iterative process with the document analysis. Story-lines and metaphors of competitiveness were identified in the documents and the interviews. At times this led interview evidence to reinforcing the points drawn from the documents, and at other times this started an iterative process whereby my interpretation of the story-lines altered because of what was said, leading me to reinterpret the sources of evidence in conjunction with one another. Therefore the analysis of the interviews was by no means a

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simple, one-way process following on from the document analysis, but existed in a fairly complex ongoing dialogue with that part of the analysis.

In terms of ethical issues with regard to the interviewees, I agreed to check direct quotations with all the interviewees prior to publication. This was both in the original Danish transcription and my English translation. The English quotations were also presented to them along with the surrounding paragraph of analysis, for the purposes of context. Although nobody refused to have a quotation included, this process did open up the possibility for censorship, however only in terms of direct quotations. Although this type of quotation offers a certain power in writing, it is rare that this is the only way of expressing a point. For this reason, censorship from this process was not a huge concern, as usually the points made could be made using other evidence or without a direct quotation being absolutely crucial. Another issue with regard to quotations is the issue of translation, through which I have attempted to keep hold of the meaning as far as possible, however, it is not always possible to translate completely satisfactorily. To make this process as transparent as possible I have provided a list of original Danish quotations in the appendix, which are numbered throughout the text (p.X).

### *Contextual Sources of Evidence*

A final source of evidence is what I am calling more ‘contextual sources’, which is related to the case study methodology. These are comprised of a number of ways in which I investigated the case study, but which are more difficult to pin down and express as concrete instances within the analytical chapters. This includes a number of visits to the city of Vejle, and also some parts of the wider municipality. Within Vejle City I made visits to a number of the projects which are focuses of the Municipality, such as the Spinning Mill Halls and the Økolariet (an environment education centre), as well as observing and experiencing the general urban environment, such as the city centre and the buildings being developed along the fjord, which is also central in much of the analysis. These first-hand experiences of the city and the municipality are particularly pertinent in terms of the parts of

the analyses which focus on ‘institutionalisation’, as amongst other things, this type of contextual evidence shows what has been implemented in the city and how visible certain projects are.

Within my analysis these forms of evidence are not explicit, which reflects their nature as more tacit sources. However in this interpretative research approach they undoubtedly have contributed to my wider findings, in terms of their shaping of my understanding of the case study. My findings could be quite different if I had just analysed documents and interviewed actors without ever visiting the municipality myself, although it is difficult to express how this forms part of the analysis. This relates back to the fundamental point made by Yin (2003), that the ‘phenomenon’ and the ‘context’ of a case study cannot be separated, so in my case ‘competitiveness’ and Vejle Municipality and city are not separately defined.

## **Reflections on the Research Approach**

When discussing the sources of evidence, I reflected on some of the very practical concerns regarding the collection and management of data. In this section I would like to reflect more broadly on the research approach in this chapter and how it has shaped this thesis, as well as how it might have been done differently and what the consequences of that might have been. This type of reflection is necessary to help the reader in understanding and interpreting the results.

The specific analytical concepts which I have assembled merit some reflection. ‘Story-lines’ is not an immediately easy concept to work with in analysis. Hajer’s (1995) description and use of the concept does not offer a straightforward way to identify a story-line in practice. This is where the iterative process of different sources of evidence comes into play, as I discussed with regard to the documents and interviews. It is also where transparency is important, and where I feel that the recognition of the role of the researcher as a narrator of their analysis and conclusions is once again significant. Through choosing to take such an interpretative approach, I have attributed myself an important role within my



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research. I have also taken an epistemology which views this type of knowledge as valid, but is simultaneously open to other interpretations of story-lines and metaphors. In this way, this thesis is the opening of a discussion about the different themes and ideas which are important in Danish spatial policy-making at the national and municipal level, and the role competitiveness plays in this.

Metaphors are more easily identified, as they are related to specific uses of language. I have chosen to focus on metaphors which both reflect the story-lines I have interpreted, and also which are used recurrently. This means that the analysis of metaphors occurred after and within the interpretation of the story-lines, and also that every use of language which would strictly count as a 'metaphor' has not been included. This means that the analysis of metaphors has been a supporting analytical concept for my story-lines, rather than an independent analysis.

The final analytical concept is 'institutionalisation', and the interpretation of the institutionalisation of a story-line is also the final step of the analysis. I have chosen to focus on the analytical concept of institutionalisation alone, rather than with the concept of 'discourse structuration', which Hajer (1995) also focuses on. This is both because of the nature of my evidence, which does not include the discussions within policy committees or speeches, for example, and also because of the lack of definition of the structuration concept.

As I mentioned in my discussion of interviews, there was a concern that I as the interviewer was inserting the competitiveness discourse into the interviewees comments and discussions. This is related to a wider reflection in the use of a discourse approach. Within this chapter, the research approach I have brought together is founded in quite a broad conceptualisation of discourse, relating it to wider themes and practices. Language is a starting point, and in terms of the element of 'metaphors', particular linguistic constructions are important. I have not, however, taken a strictly linguistic approach to discourse. For example, a critical discourse analysis approach might place significance on the number of times a certain term, such as competitiveness, was uttered by interviewees (e.g. Fairclough 2000). Therefore if I had taken that approach to discourse, my

introduction of the term would have been very problematic in terms of the validity of the results of the research.

In this research approach I have chosen to focus more broadly, as I have stated, and my use of the analytical concept of ‘story-lines’ means that I am not as reliant on the exact words which the interviewees use or are used in policies. Competitiveness can be, and was, discussed in terms of broader themes (which later in the analysis may have been characterised as individual story-lines), without the use of the actual word ‘competitiveness’ being important. This is related to a broader concern with a discourse approach, which is the fundamentally interpretative nature of it, which places the researcher in a position of considerable power with regard to analysis and interpretation of results. It is for this reason I have chosen to highlight the position of the researcher as a narrator, creating their own narrative from the research. This kind of approach requires a certain transparency so the reader can see how the analysis has been carried out and the results interpreted and to some extent make their own judgements.

## **Conclusions**

Within this chapter I have discussed my general research approach, as well as introduced the specific analytical concepts and the sources of evidence which I will use in my analysis (table 4.1). The discursive concepts of story-lines, metaphors and institutionalisation are those I will use in analysing my case. This discourse-based approach is complemented by the use of a case study, which brings in various sources of evidence and places a focus on the inseparability of discourse and context. I have also highlighted the importance of the researcher and the writing and presentation of research within this interpretative approach by discussing the narrative approach to research. Some of the limitations and potential issues with this research approach have been identified.

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The specific analytical concepts which I have introduced will now come to the fore in the next three chapters, as I first analyse competitiveness in Danish national policy, followed by an analysis of the case study of competitiveness story-lines in Vejle Municipality. In the final conclusion of the thesis I will also return more thoroughly to the research approach as a whole, in terms of reflecting on its use in the thesis.

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **STORY-LINES OF COMPETITIVENESS IN DENMARK**

### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the contemporary story-lines of competitiveness in national policy in Denmark, aiming at answering the first research question, regarding how competitiveness is framed at the national level in Denmark. There is a more international landscape of competitiveness, where competitiveness is promoted by international organisations and has been taken into policies of governments around the world. This is the wider context within which the Danish focus on competitiveness should be viewed. Aside from this 'scene-setting' for the case study of Vejle Municipality, in this chapter I also interpret two complementary story-lines of competitiveness in Denmark. I demonstrate that competitiveness has taken a hold in Danish policy as it has elsewhere in the world, by examining general governmental policy statements and reports from the previous decade, as well as the national spatial planning policy statements.

Internationally there are various organisations, such as the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

(OECD) and the EU, which promote the competitiveness discourse in different ways. In particular, reports which benchmark and rank different countries and cities are notable in terms of the encouragement of competitiveness, which tends to be a fairly indirect process rather than the explicit forming of national and local policies.

The following sections focus on the interpretation and analysis of story-lines and metaphors of competitiveness in policies and statements from the Danish government and several national ministries. The first of these story-lines I refer to as 'a leading Denmark'. This is a story-line related to a metaphor of a competitive race, envisaging Denmark as a competitive entity, competing against other similar countries in a large variety of public and private sectors. The second of these story-lines is 'internal competitiveness', and here, through a metaphor of places having special identities, particular areas and cities in Denmark are put forward as essential to the competitiveness of the country. I will conclude the chapter with a discussion of these two story-lines and their institutionalisations.

The analysis in this chapter is based on various policy statements from the Danish government, the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs, and the Ministry of the Environment. The first of these is engaged with governmental policies related to spatial competitiveness, but generally originating in an economic understanding. The second is involved with spatial planning at a national level. These policy statements are from the last two decades, and they provide a short historical view of some of the reframing processes over this period as well as a snapshot of contemporary story-lines of competitiveness. The document analysis is supplemented by a small number of interviews carried out with actors in the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment. A full list of documents and interviews used can be found in the primary sources list (p.177).

## **An International Landscape of Competitiveness**

‘Competitiveness’ is an undeniably global discourse. As discussed in chapter two, there are debates about the competitiveness of nations, and particularly from an economic standpoint, whether this is in fact a meaningful term. However, whether or not one subscribes to its veracity, it is true that a variety of actors are promoting competitiveness internationally. From international organisations to private consultancy companies to many national governments, ‘competitiveness’ is a common aim. These organisations are linked to a variety of direct and indirect mechanisms which promote competitiveness. In fact, the “concern with competitiveness has spawned a large industry aimed at policy makers, analysts and enterprises” (Lall 2001:1501), which is “busy urging governments everywhere to reform the business climate, promote investment and stimulate competitiveness” (Bristow 2010:3).

One organisation which receives particular attention due to its annual “Global Competitiveness Reports” is the World Economic Forum (WEF). This is an organisation rooted in industry, which describes itself as being “committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas” (WEF 2011). Their desire to ‘shape’ policy is explicit. The “Global Competitiveness Reports” are one of the WEF’s major products, and they receive a significant amount of attention in policy-making, academia and the wider media (Lall 2001). Lall (2001) has analysed these reports from a development economics standpoint, and has found them to be lacking in terms of their overall aims. She also has concerns about the implications of the policies they encourage for developing economies. As I will demonstrate with the Danish case, the preoccupation with being ‘competitive’ that these types of reports encourage is by no means limited to countries of the developing world.

Sum (2009) gives a broad overview of the different competitiveness discourses and instruments that exist at different scales, from the WEF’s reports, to various country’s competitiveness policies, right down to the plans of particular cities. The popularity of benchmarking reports and indices is particularly notable here,

as “competitiveness’ narratives are linked to the development of knowledging apparatuses such as benchmarking reports and indices” (Sum 2009:192). Sum argues that the numerical order and annual revisions of these reports have a disciplinary power. This is not necessarily a direct power, and as Graz underlines as well, the power of such “world-wide élite groups” rests not on a direct connection to states, for example through an allocation of resources, but on “loose and informal channels of power” (Graz 2003:322). This power places countries in high or low positions “in the competitive race” (Sum 2009:194), and there is potentially a pressure to produce certain types of economic and social policies due to “the treadmill of competitiveness” (Sum 2009:194), in the hope that one’s country will gain a higher position in the hierarchy.

Whereas the WEF is a private organisation, based in industry, the OECD is an international organisation. Yet, like the WEF, it “does not focus on classic foreign policy issues, nor does it possess the budgetary or sanctioning powers enjoyed by the main economic international organizations” (Mahon & McBride 2009:87). Mahon & McBride (2009) emphasise the role of the OECD in terms of ‘inquisitive’ and ‘meditative’ regulation, whereby the organisation surveys and monitors the actions of member states, and discusses and researches the ‘best practices’ and ‘benchmarks’ for these actions. The OECD has a role mainly in terms of “influencing the direction of policy” (Mahon & McBride 2009:84), although it is also important to note that states can ignore (and have done so) OECD advice and the institution is “far from monolithic” (Mahon & McBride 2009:98). Even so, when OECD recommendations and policy ideas are not adopted wholesale, there often seems to be OECD influence in reforms, and furthermore neoliberal “economic imperatives for the most part outweigh those represented by other portfolios” (Mahon & McBride 2009:99).

The EU is another organisation where competitiveness is a highly visible discourse. The Lisbon Strategy (2000) is particularly notable in this regard, however the EU’s concern with competitiveness dates back further. Rosamund (2002) argues that competitiveness was an important element of policy discussions in Europe as early as the 1980s, and Fougner (2006) also states that policy literature on competitiveness began to appear in that decade. Rosamund

(2002) argues in fact that competitiveness is part of the very foundation of Europe's construction as an economic space. Here he highlights the importance not just of the EU's 'competitiveness', but also the discourse of a 'competitive threat' from other parts of the world. This shows some of the relative and comparative elements of the competitiveness discourse, through a concern with being 'more' competitive than other places.

As well as national competitiveness, the OECD has also turned its focus to other scales, for example in the 2006 report "Competitive Cities in the Global Economy". This report proposes that it is cities that are "important generators of wealth, employment and productivity growth" (OECD 2006:3), attributing them a special importance within national economies. This report encourages the 'increase' of the competitiveness of cities, by focusing on trends and factors of competitiveness as well as issues which policy-makers might face. This also demonstrates that, although international organisations seem to be mainly occupied with states as competitive units, there is also some focus placed on the urban scale, and in particular on the city as a 'generator' of national competitiveness.

This brief overview offers just a glimpse of the international discourse of competitiveness, providing a contextualisation for the study of the discourse in Denmark. Competitiveness is being promoted by inter-governmental organisations and private international institutions, usually with the overall aim of making the mobility of international investment and business easier. Policy reports, benchmarking and the promotion of particular discourses of development are often aimed at national governments, but also at actors within cities, encouraging them to take certain actions. The power of these policies and reports is generally not direct, but is rather loose and undefined. Furthermore these policies and reports propagate a certain view of the world and the 'need' to be competitive.



## **Competitiveness in Denmark**

Denmark is by no means immune to this competitiveness “obsession” (Krugman 1996a). As at the international level, the competitiveness discourse is apparent in policies and practices, as well as in an interest in the results of international benchmarking and ranking. Here I will analyse the institutionalisation of competitiveness in Danish policy, as well as interpret two particular story-lines and associated metaphors of competitiveness which exist at the national level. These are in terms of governmental policy statements, as well as policies and reports from the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment. As I discussed in chapter two, my focus is mainly on the discourse of spatial competitiveness. In this chapter the story-lines have an inherently spatial character, in terms of their concern with states, regions and cities. Even so, ‘overlap’ is evident with other understandings of competitiveness, for example the competitiveness of firms, illustrating the extent to which these different understandings and metaphors of competitiveness are linked.

Denmark has been discussed in certain quarters of competitiveness literature in terms of its ability to compete “successfully against other advanced capitalist economies” (Campbell & Pedersen 2007:230). Pedersen (2011) has even dubbed the current socio-economic model in Denmark as a ‘competition state’, distinguishing this from a former ‘welfare state’. Campbell & Pedersen (2007) take a point of departure in the reports of the WEF discussed above, and then consider why Denmark performs well in these rankings. They argue this is due to various elements of Denmark’s economic and social institutions, such as its ‘flexicurity’ labour market model and the high level of training which employees typically receive. This type of assessment might make one believe that Denmark as a state is secure in its ‘ability to compete’, meaning that competitiveness might not be as obvious in national policy-making as in countries which are ‘struggling to compete’, such as those developing economies with which Lall (2001) was concerned. However as this analysis will show, this is absolutely not the case. As Rosamund (2002) discussed with reference to the EU, the very threat of no longer

being competitive, no longer being one of these ‘most competitive countries’, is enough to keep competitiveness as a key concern in national policy-making.

I have interpreted two major story-lines of spatial competitiveness in Denmark. These story-lines also correspond with metaphors which produce a certain understanding of Denmark’s development, as well as legitimise certain courses of action. These two story-lines are based around Denmark ‘leading’ the world in various sectors, and on an internal competition between places in Denmark. These story-lines are linked to more specific metaphors of understanding, including a ‘competitive race’, and the idea of certain places as ‘growth centres’ and having ‘identities’.

### **A Leading Denmark and a Competitive Race**

The first of the two story-lines of competitiveness which I have interpreted from national policy is that of Denmark being a ‘leading’ country in a globalised world, which is further emphasised by a metaphor of a ‘race’ in which Denmark needs to keep up. This story-line is particularly apparent in governmental coalition agreements and policy statements from the 2000s. In this story-line Denmark is being conceptualised as a country which should strive to remain the ‘best’ both economically, and also in a large variety of other sectors, compared to other developed countries.

This story-line relies on an understanding of globalisation as an external context, which is having a two-sided effect on Denmark, offering the country opportunities, but also certain challenges. This creates a situation whereby policies are needed to plan for taking up these opportunities whilst avoiding the threats. An illustration of this dichotomy can be taken from the 2002 policy statement *Growth with Purpose*. Denmark has a place “amongst the world’s most affluent countries”, but is simultaneously a “welfare society under pressure, where there is a need for renewal and improvement in a lot of areas”<sup>4</sup> (2002:8). The story-line of ‘being the best’ is evident in terms of the pride in being one of the

most affluent countries in the world, but there is an ever-present fear that “in ten years we will not necessarily be at the top, if we do not do something”<sup>5</sup> (2002:8). Therefore there is a great will to act to keep hold of this apparently desirable leading position.

This context of globalisation, and the dichotomy of opportunities and threats, is also evident in the 2005 debate booklet *Denmark and Globalisation*. Here it is stated at the outset that “globalisation means an opening up of the world, which is what we wanted, and which gives Denmark great opportunities”<sup>6</sup> (2005:5). The fear that Denmark might not remain ‘at the top’ is again reiterated, stating that if they do not take the ‘opportunities’ of globalisation there is a “risk that in sharpened competition we cannot hold onto our position among the richest countries in the world, because other countries will overtake us”<sup>7</sup> (2005:5). This story-line of a leading Denmark is again being conceptualised in this dichotomised manner, with the proactive idea of taking opportunities, and the reactive idea of preventing others ‘overtaking’ Denmark. This is also an explicitly comparative story-line, viewing Denmark alongside other similar countries.

Beyond this link between globalisation and Denmark’s desire to be a ‘leading’ country, there are more specific uses of the leading Denmark story-line. This includes goals and actions, which are linked to the idea of a ‘leading’ country. In *Denmark and Globalisation* the government sets out a number of goals, all of which emphasise this story-line:

“Denmark as a leading knowledge society: We are setting the goal, that public and private companies together increase the focus in research and development, so Denmark in 2010 reaches an amount over 3% of the gross national product, with public research accounting for 1% of this.

Denmark as a leading entrepreneurship society: We are setting the goal, that Denmark in 2015 is amongst the societies in the world where the most growth companies are started.

World-class education: We are setting the goal, that pupils in primary school become amongst the best in the world at reading, mathematics and science. That all young people complete a youth education - and at least 85% in 2010 and 95% in 2015. And at least 45% complete a further education in 2010 and 50% in 2015.

An innovative society: We are setting the goal, that Denmark is the world's most competitive society in 2015."<sup>8</sup> (2005:17)

These four goals all express the institutionalisation of the story-line of Denmark as 'leading', 'the best' and 'the most competitive'. Furthermore these general goals are linked to quantifiable aims, such as having 95% of children complete a youth education in 2015, or having research spending as 3% of the GDP in 2010. This story-line is therefore institutionalised both at a general policy level, but also in the finer details of national goals, which are then be linked to actions in a wide range of sectors.

In later policy statements, the discourse of being 'leading' is further developed and institutionalised. The 2006 'globalisation strategy' *Progress, Innovation and Cohesion: Strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy* presents fourteen focus areas for Danish policy. A number of these directly relate to the competitive discourse of Denmark being amongst the 'best' countries in the world. This ranges from education, where both state schools and universities should be 'world-class', to the idea of competition itself, with the aim that Denmark should be the most competitive country in the world in 2015. In this strategy, as in the documents before it, it is evident that there exists an inclination to quantify Denmark's competitive achievements, so as to be able to judge whether these ambitions have been achieved or not. These quantifications can then be compared to other countries, such as members of the EU and the OECD. Therefore this story-line is attached to quite coherent and institutionalised actions.

This quantification is taken to its height in the introduction of annual *Competitiveness Reports* from 2006. These draw on figures from the OECD and Statistics Denmark, and track indicators in various sectors which are deemed

essential to Denmark's competitiveness. These reports cover the topics highlighted in the 2006 globalisation strategy, such as state schools, the effectiveness of public services, entrepreneurship, the flexibility of the labour market and welfare. The stated goal is that Denmark should be in the top five of OECD countries in every one of these sectors, and each year progress (or not) is presented in rankings. Here the discourse of being 'leading' has been institutionalised in Danish policy, with a belief in hard evidence about the country's position and ability to compete. The countries of the OECD are the explicit point of comparison, showing the links to the international 'competitiveness industry'.

This comparative, competitive story-line is clear in national policy-making. Over the last ten years there has been an emphasis on Denmark 'being the best' in every area, and this is linked to the quantification of many parts of society through the *Competitiveness Reports*. In 2010 a new governmental policy statement, *Denmark 2020: Knowledge, Growth, Affluence, Welfare*, laid out ten "ambitious goals"<sup>9</sup> (2010:11). This illustrates the now strong institutionalisation of competitiveness, as every single goal is framed in terms of competition and comparison. With certain goals this is particularly explicit and is 'measurable', such as the overall goal to be "amongst the 10 richest countries in the world", and the goal that a Danish university should be in "Europe's top 10". Other goals are less clear-cut in how they will be assessed, for example being "amongst the most free countries" or the Danish population being "one of the world's most trusting and confident people", however the comparative element and the desire to be the best in is still clear in these goals:

"The Government's Goals for Denmark 2020

1. Denmark shall be amongst the 10 richest countries in the world.
2. The Danish labour supply shall be amongst the 10 highest in the world.
3. Danish school children shall be amongst the most capable in the world.

4. At least one Danish university shall be in Europe's top 10.
5. Denmark shall be amongst the 10 countries in the world, where one lives longest.
6. Denmark shall be a green sustainable society and amongst the world's three most energy-effective countries.
7. Denmark shall be amongst the best to create equal opportunities.
8. Denmark shall be amongst the most free countries and amongst the best in Europe at integration.
9. The Danes shall be one of the world's most trusting and confident people.
10. The public sector shall be amongst the most effective and least bureaucratic in the world.”<sup>10</sup> (2010:11)

Therefore at a national policy-making level there is a strong story-line of Denmark as a 'competitive' entity, and furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on rankings and hierarchies of Denmark's success, and being able to measure this against other countries, particularly OECD countries. This story-line of a necessity for Denmark to be and remain 'the best' in terms of various sectors of society, including business development, education and service provision, is also heavily institutionalised at the national level. The most obvious sign of this institutionalisation is the annual publication of *Competitiveness Reports*, which focus on a quantitative measurement of each of the sectors which have been considered essential to Denmark's national competitiveness. Institutionalisation of this story-line is also evident in the strong presence of competitiveness in policy goals, which are then manifested in actions in a wide range of sectors, from education, to labour policy, to provision of welfare services. Through a use of OECD figures, these reports represent a locally-specific version of the international benchmarking and ranking which was discussed at the start of this chapter.

One metaphor in particular is evident in this 'leading Denmark' story-line, which is that of a 'race' between countries. This is metaphor is part of the comparative element of the story-line, placing a focus on Denmark's placing in a race with other countries, particularly those in the OECD. It is also evident in the fear of being bettered by other countries, which keeps a focus on competitiveness in Denmark despite its being a country which is already apparently quite 'successful' at competing. For example, education is being conceptualised strongly in terms of this race metaphor. Denmark has not made the same progress in educational levels between generations as other countries, such as Finland, Norway and Korea. This means that Denmark is now 'behind' in the number of young people with a further education. Elsewhere this metaphor of a race has also been explicit, for example in the quote used above which expressed a fear that Denmark would be "overtaken"<sup>11</sup> (2005:5) as one of the world's richest countries.

### **Internal Competitiveness**

The first story-line of competitiveness was very much based on an idea of Denmark as a single unit competing against the rest of the world. There has, however, also developed a story-line of competitiveness within Denmark. The discourse of internal competitiveness is particularly visible in national spatial planning policy, which in recent years has placed more focus on particular areas of Denmark, and also on the 'identity' of cities and a need for 'specialisation'.

Whilst competitiveness has come into greater focus in planning in recent years, 'growth' and its assumed benefits has been accepted in Danish planning for many years (Gaardmand 1993). National debates have mainly focused on where growth should occur (Gaardmand 1993), which is where the understanding of competition between places within Denmark begins to enter the picture. Over at least the last 15 years the regular *National Spatial Planning Reports* have framed Denmark as being a part of a competitive world, most often with recourse to a general context of 'globalisation'. These reports are visions or guidelines on "how the government views the country's geographical future"<sup>12</sup> (Interview BN 2010),

in that they map out the spatial ‘status’ of the country and particular goals and ideas for planning for the future. Since the early 1990s these reports have each taken up different themes, such as business sites or European planning. Throughout this period there has been an equally consistent focus on the idea that development within Denmark should be ‘balanced’, meaning that all places in Denmark should have similar services and infrastructure and develop in particular ways. This has shifted slightly in more recent planning reports, with a growing focus on the specialisation of places generally and on more specific areas of the country.

The 1997 report focused on European perspectives on Danish planning, and in this report competition and the ability of Denmark to compete is mentioned at various points (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 1997). There is a simultaneous commitment to development in all areas and regions of Denmark, with concerns expressed regarding loss of population and jobs in villages and rural areas generally. As would be expected with the European focus of this report, a lot of links are drawn to the European Spatial Development Perspective process which was underway at that time, as well as setting goals for planning on both a European and a national level. ‘Balance’ is a key word in this report, focusing on the development of all types of places in a “polycentric urban system”<sup>13</sup> (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 1997:13). Although the strengthening of Copenhagen is a goal, this is not a strong theme in the report, and the hierarchy of service provision and different categories of settlements, as well as more rural areas, are all in strong focus in this report.

The 2000 report which followed this also begins with ideas about globalisation, but states that there is a need for Denmark to develop in the face of the challenges this brings. This report is entitled *Local Identity and New Challenges* (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000), and it reflects a strong emphasis on regions and cities having “distinctive characteristics” (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000:5) through which they should “realise their potential”<sup>14</sup> (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000:5). This focus on ‘distinctive characteristics’ and specialisations is linked to “the train of thought that now the individual city should focus on what they were strong in, where they were well-placed in the competition”, which was also “in cooperation



with the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs' thoughts about competitive clusters and business clusters, which was well connected with our way of viewing it"<sup>15</sup> (Interview BN 2010). The idea here is that localities should not focus broadly on business development but focus on creating "branches or clusters" of firms which "have built up unique competencies and advanced knowledge"<sup>16</sup> (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000:6). This idea of 'distinctive characteristics' is strongly linked to business development generally, and also to an idea of planning at the regional and local level changing. It is considered that the key issues for planning are now "the city's and the place's identity-bearing character and cultural capital"<sup>17</sup> (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000:8), and that planning at the local level should "also make the place and the city aesthetically better, and this will contribute to the area's land use, lay-out and architecture expressing the diversity, which characterises Denmark"<sup>18</sup> (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000:8). This focus on local identity does not preclude an identification of 'growth centres', but there is a general theme that with their individual 'distinctive characteristics', "all cities are allocated a role in the development of the country"<sup>19</sup> (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000:14). Therefore in this report there is a greater focus on places within Denmark developing differently, and a focus on individual places, although overall 'balance' is still a conscious focus.

The 2003 report even refers to balance in its title: *Denmark in Balance: What should be done?* (Miljøministeriet 2003). Here it is stated that although service provision and communications are regarded as fairly equal throughout the country, population growth and increasing incomes and employment have been concentrated in the regions with larger cities. Therefore the problem which this report seeks to highlight is the need for national initiatives to encourage a more even pattern of development, offsetting the disadvantages which some regions are perceived to be facing.

In 2006 there are significant if subtle changes (Miljøministeriet 2006). The context of the globalised, competitive world seems to have remained the same, and the idea of 'balance' within Denmark has not disappeared. However, in this report particular areas are being singled out as requiring different planning approaches. Cities are being attributed a role in attracting growth to Denmark,

but with the proviso that this growth should benefit the whole country. The area around Copenhagen, Zealand and Eastern Jutland are the regions which are named in this report, and the focus on them has been institutionalised through special planning initiatives for these areas. Other areas of the country are simply classified as ‘medium-sized urban areas’ and ‘outlying areas’, and these are not expected to experience major growth or to have an international position. Therefore this report has emphasised this subtle discourse of sub-national competitiveness. Focus on particular cities and areas was now deemed beneficial for the whole country, and competitiveness within Denmark seems to be accepted. This builds on the idea from earlier reports that places should focus on their ‘distinctive character’.

A particular metaphor which is related to this focus on ‘internal competition’ in national spatial planning is places as having certain ‘identities’. This metaphor generates an idea that places ‘should’ develop differently, and furthermore that economic specialisation is desirable, as this is conceived as simply building upon the place’s ‘identity’. This metaphor, as I have mentioned in the analysis above, was evident and has been key in several of the National Planning Reports (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 1997, 2000; Miljøministeriet 2003, 2006).

Particular places are being framed with an even more specific metaphor, that of the ‘growth centre’. Here places such as Copenhagen and the Eastern Jutland Region are being conceived as the areas which should develop and grow, with the associated idea being that the growth of these places will benefit the whole of Denmark. These are two metaphors which promote the general focus on competitiveness, as they conceive differential development as necessary and desirable.

## **Conclusion**

The findings regarding story-lines, metaphors and the institutionalisation of competitiveness in Danish national policy are shown in table 5.1. These story-

	Story-Lines	Metaphors	Institutionalisation
<i>National Level</i>	A Leading Denmark	A competitive race	Governmental policies promoting competitiveness <i>Annual Competitiveness Reports</i>
	Internal Competition	Growth centres; places having special identities	National Spatial Planning Reports Special planning initiatives in certain places

Table 5.1: Story-Lines, Metaphors and the Institutionalisation of Competitiveness in selected national policies.

lines and metaphors show the general focus on competitiveness in Denmark, but also some of the flexibility of the discourse. The first of the story-lines which I conceptualised focused on a 'leading' Denmark, where emphasis was placed on Denmark remaining one of the world's richest countries, alongside the desire to be the best in a variety of sectors, as well as to track and quantify these achievements. Although initially a particularly economic discourse, this was also broadened to various social sectors, as well as being defined as necessary in order to maintain the Danish welfare state. The second of the story-lines I conceptualised was related to an internal competitiveness, placing focus on certain areas of Denmark as 'motors' in competition. This was in turn connected to an emphasis on planning for growth in these areas, as well as encouraging places to specialise in particular economic sectors as an effective way to 'compete'.

The discourse of competitiveness is quite strongly institutionalised at the national level. As I have shown with both of the competitiveness story-lines, they are linked to policy actions. In terms of 'being the best', there is the annual quantification through the *Competitiveness Reports*, and within each of these sectors, policies are geared towards aims such as 'world-class education'. Therefore national policy-making generally has shifted to focus on these competitive aims. With the 'internal competitiveness' story-line the level of institutionalisation is perhaps not as strong, in that the national spatial planning reports are less explicitly linked to policies and actions. The selection of certain areas of the country as 'growth centres' is the most obvious example of institutionalisation here, as special planning initiatives are then being pursued within these areas to attempt to meet growth aims.

Altogether in this chapter I have shown an overview of an international landscape of competitiveness, within which Denmark fits. The story-lines of competitiveness which I have interpreted in Denmark are operating to some extent at different scales, and are complementary rather than opposing. The 'growth centres' of the internal competition story-line are linked to the necessity

#### STORY-LINES OF COMPETITIVENESS IN DENMARK

of a 'leading Denmark', and furthermore, these story-lines legitimise uneven development within Denmark, framing it with metaphors related to 'growth' and 'specialisation'. These story-lines and their associated metaphors are institutionalised in contemporary policy, and also through goals and policy practices in various sectors, and the focus on the growth of certain areas of the country.

This provides a context of a 'competitive Denmark', both externally and internally, within which local governments are operating. This type of national context could be viewed as limiting the policy-making choices of municipalities, and therefore the framings of competitiveness in Vejle Municipality could be expected to mirror some of these findings. The next two chapters will focus on the analysis of this case study, and illuminate a more complex situation.

# **CHAPTER SIX**

## **DEVELOPMENT OF**

### **COMPETITIVENESS STORY-LINES IN**

#### **VEJLE MUNICIPALITY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on an analysis of municipal planning in Vejle Municipality over approximately the last 30 years. This is focused on the second research question, regarding the historical institutionalisation of competitiveness-oriented story-lines in a small city. It is based on documentary analysis of municipal plans and related publications from the period 1982-2009. Through this analysis, I show recent historical shifts in key story-lines in municipal planning in Vejle Municipality, towards an increasing competitiveness orientation.

Throughout this chapter I interpret three major story-lines in municipal planning and the shifts in these story-lines over time. As I discussed in chapter four, these story-lines are an interpretation and form the researcher's narrative. These story-lines contribute to the overall theme of the thesis by addressing the process of the institutionalisation of competitiveness over time. Together with the next chapter, this offers an overview of the institutionalisation of competitiveness in Vejle Municipality.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETITIVENESS STORY-LINES IN VEJLE MUNICIPALITY

The first story-line is related to the role of municipal planning and of the municipality as an agent of 'development'. I conceptualise this story-line as shifting over time from a focus on spatial and social equality, with a fairly limited idea of the agency of the municipality, to a focus on particular spatial locations and groups, and on a 'visionary' role for the municipality. This story-line should be viewed in a context of changing municipal budgets, wider economic trends, and also a shift in the idea of the role of municipal planning in Denmark more widely.

The second story-line is related to the 'range' of vision of the municipality. This refers to another shift, from a fairly inward-looking municipality to a more externally-oriented municipality. There are various threads in this story-line. In the earlier plans there is a focus within the boundaries of the municipality, however this shifts in later plans towards a more extroverted focus. This extrovert focus is not simple, in that there seems to exist some tension between 'being the best' and focusing on cooperation.

The third story-line which I interpret is around the focus of municipal development. This shifts from a generalised focus, again particularly in terms of the spatial equality of the municipality, to a more 'specialised' focus, with a desire to focus on particular types of people and companies within the municipality. This again has several threads, with a focus on 'experiences' and 'creativity' being particularly notable in municipal development in the later plans.

I will continue this chapter with a brief introduction to Danish municipal planning, and an historical overview of Vejle Municipality's development. This will provide background for the case study in this chapter and the next. I will then move on to the analysis of the three story-lines and draw conclusions related to the research question. These story-lines will then also form the structure of the analysis in the next chapter.

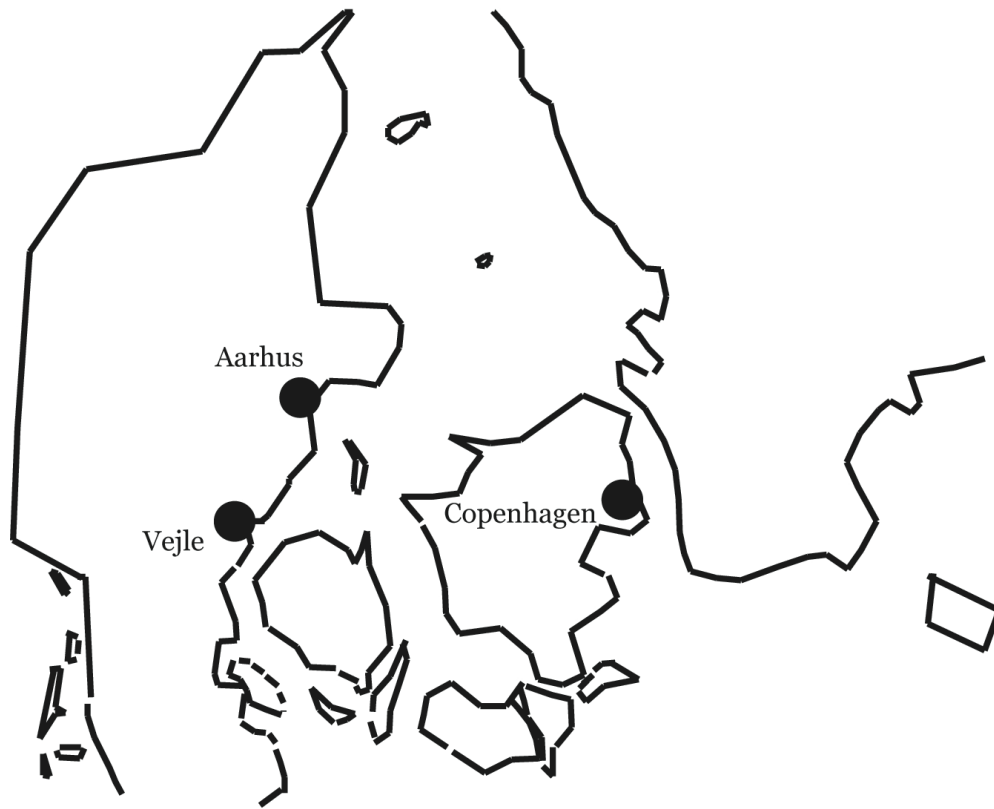


Figure 6.1: Map showing Vejle in Denmark.

### **Vejle Municipality**

To briefly touch on the origins of the city of Vejle, a settlement has been in this location for almost 700 years (figure 6.1). Despite this lengthy history, Vejle has only really experienced significant growth since the 1800s when industrialisation occurred in the town. These industries included metal, textiles, timber and paper, and foodstuffs. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the textile industry in particular developed, and in 1940 Vejle was a city where 40% of the economically active population were involved in industry, with this being one of the largest proportions in Denmark (Becker-Christensen *et al* 1996). Industry continued to develop through the 1950s and 1960s, coinciding with a time of good economic growth and low unemployment.



From around the 1970s these older production industries began to disappear from Vejle. The textile and metal industries, in particular, declined, with other industries, such as foodstuffs, adapting to new conditions. In more recent years IT companies have developed, and in the 1990s service and administrative businesses were by far the greatest employer in Vejle. (Becker-Christensen *et al* 1996).

Apart from being a traditionally industrial city, Vejle has also long been a strong retail centre for the surrounding area. Originally this was in terms of smaller shops in the city centre, with the development of larger warehouses on the outskirts since the 1960s. The city centre has undergone physical renewal several times, including the establishment of a permanent pedestrian street in 1980. (Brønfeld *et al* 1998)

Politically, Vejle has been a long-time Social Democratic city, with Social Democrats in power (either in a coalition or as a majority) in the entire period from 1920-1994. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there has also been a fair amount of stability in the mayoral position. Willy Sørensen was mayor from 1946 until his death in 1978 (Brønfeld *et al* 1998). In the 1990s the Social Democratic hold was broken by the election of Flemming Christensen of the Socialist People's Party as mayor. This position was particularly notable due to his coalition support initially coming from the centre-right. Christensen continued as mayor until the mid-2000s. With the formation of a larger Vejle Municipality, the Social Democrats again took over, with Leif Skov as mayor for the first electoral period in this municipality, however this time the reign was short-lived, with Arne Sigtenbjerggaard of the Liberal party taking over in 2010.

There has also been a certain amount of stability in the leading civil servants of Vejle Municipality since the 1970s, when the first of the larger Vejle Municipalities was formed. Oluf Jensen served as the Municipal Director (head of the municipal administration) from the 1970s to the 1990s, and since his departure Niels Ågesen has held the position (Hellum *et al* 2002). Various interviewees signalled the importance of individuals in the direction of development in Vejle Municipality,

and although this is not a major theme in this thesis, the stability of people in the main leadership positions perhaps indicates some of this individual power.

## **Municipal Reforms**

There have been two municipal reforms over the last forty years in Denmark, and these have of course also led to change in the entity that is 'Vejle Municipality'. The first municipal reform was in 1970, when the total number of municipalities in Denmark was reduced from over 1000 to 277 (Gaardmand 1993), and the more recent of these reforms came into effect at the start of 2007, reducing the number of municipalities again to 98. These reforms have meant larger municipalities in both area and population, as well as changed and increased responsibilities for the municipal organisations.

In terms of the geography of Vejle Municipality specifically, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it was comprised of what would now be viewed as the 'city centre' of Vejle. Surrounding areas, such as Engum and Højen, were independent municipalities, albeit with a close relationship to Vejle Municipality. The municipal reform in 1970 led to the fusion of Vejle with seven surrounding municipalities. The population of Vejle Municipality increased by 57% and the area of the municipality by 89% (Brønfeld *et al* 1998:228). This was something which had been desired, at least from the side of Vejle, for a number of years, as it seemed clear that these municipalities were all a part of the same urban centre. Furthermore the low tax rates in the surrounding municipalities were rather provocative to Vejle, as it meant that the more well-off tended to live in those areas, and on top of this, Vejle was very much the cultural and service centre for all of these municipalities (Brønfeld *et al* 1998:227-228).

The most recent municipal reform was viewed by the government as necessary to secure the future of Denmark's public sector, of which municipalities have always been a key provider. Specifically with regard to municipal planning, this reform elevated the municipal plan to the "most important type of plan" (Ministry of Environment 2007:22), as the legally binding regional plan was abolished. This

reform was viewed as part of the “long tradition for taking care of the most vulnerable in our society and investing in people and the future”<sup>20</sup> (Indenrigs- og Sundhedsministeriet 2004:5). This was however a reform which was undertaken with surprising speed, being first debated in the summer of 2002, agreed in the summer of 2004, and implemented in 2007 (Bundgaard & Vrangbæk 2007).

The 2007 municipal reform has made ‘Vejle Municipality’ even larger. This was of a somewhat different character to the previous reform, in that the municipalities merged were not a continuous part of the urban structure of Vejle. Rather, they are a number of distinct small urban centres and rural areas which have been merged into a single municipal administration, including the towns of Egtved, Jelling, Børkop and Give. Today the municipality has about 105000 inhabitants, and the city of Vejle itself has about 51000 inhabitants (Vejle Kommune 2010).

## **Municipal Planning in Denmark**

The analysis in this chapter is based on municipal plans, which have been a central feature of municipal planning in Denmark since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The first planning law came into force in 1925, however as Gaardmand (1993) writes, this was such a broad and complicated piece of legislation that municipalities did not or were not able to take up the relevant regulations at that time. The 1938 City Planning Law [*Byplanloven*] was therefore the first effective law for municipal planning. This made it obligatory for every settlement with over 1000 inhabitants to create a city plan within the following five years (Gaardmand 1993). In practice this planning was divided between a general development plan [*dispositonsplan*] and more specific city planning ordinances [*byplanvedtægter*]. This general division of municipal planning into the overall and the more specific is something which remains in Danish municipal planning today, albeit with further specifications and different terminology. Furthermore the types of themes which the 1938 planning law aimed to cover are still familiar in municipal planning today, such as traffic, green areas, industry, housing and infrastructure such as sewers and drainage.

The Danish planning law was reformed again in the 1970s, in several stages from 1969-1977. This created a distinct hierarchy of plans, where “national planning should be superior and create the frame for municipal planning, which is the basis for the preparation of local plans”<sup>21</sup> (Gaardmand 1993:190). Specific issues which became more in focus in this reform included a greater openness in planning as well as public participation, and overall a greater level of decentralisation. Gaardmand also views this as a time in which there was a growing politicisation of planning, meaning that the legislators thought that “all planning had a large content of political priorities, and that it should therefore be subject to the conditions of the political world”<sup>22</sup> (Gaardmand 1993:192).

The creation of the ‘Municipal Plan’ [*Kommuneplan*] was connected to this reform of planning law, and was brought into practice in 1977. This plan was viewed as an attempt to control some of the side-effects of growth which had been observed in the boom years of the 1960s and early 1970s (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 1999). There was also a perceived need “to view land use as a greater whole and to coordinate planning of future land use”<sup>23</sup> (Miljøministeriet 1991:84), which the municipal plan was intended to meet. Initially the municipal plan as outlined in this legislation was predisposed to a physically-based consideration of planning, however this law was not extremely prescriptive with a substantial amount of room for interpretation on the part of the individual municipality. Latterly it became viewed as a “framework law, which never had the intention to get municipalities to act in the same manner”<sup>24</sup> (Miljøministeriet 1991:74).

In 1992 planning laws were reformed again, most notably making it compulsory for a municipal plan to be revised every four years, instead of simply when the municipality deemed it necessary. This was partly a response to the large number of additions which were being created for municipal plans, which was seen by many municipalities as preferable to undertaking a full-scale revision of the plan. This planning law conceptualised the municipal plan in three parts: the ‘main structure’ [*hovedstruktur*], the ‘frame conditions’ [*rammebetingelser*] and the ‘report’ [*redegørelse*]. The ‘frame conditions’ section is supplementary to the main structure, and was there to outline what could be decided within local plans.

The ‘report’ was intended to outline the preconditions for the municipal plan as well as a plan for implementation, and this was intended as informative rather than legally-binding.

The current structure of municipal planning, which was revised in conjunction with the recent municipal reform, is still based on this three-part system. Since 2000, there has also been a requirement to produce a ‘plan strategy’ [*planstrategi*] within the first two years of an election period, which “includes the municipal council’s political strategy for development and information on the planning occurring since the last time the municipal plan was revised” (Ministry of Environment 2007:18).

### **Vejle’s Municipal Plans in Brief**

There are four main municipal plans on which I have based this analysis. These are from the years 1986, 1996, 2001 and 2009, and I have mainly used the ‘main structures’ of these plans. Alongside these plans I have analysed a selection of documents which support these plans, including overviews of planning produced for public debate, reports on municipal planning and municipal plan drafts.

The first municipal plan which I analyse is from 1986. This municipal plan was the first to be produced in Vejle Municipality under the new planning legislation. It was produced by a small consultancy company hired by the municipality. This plan, along with the debate publications produced in the lead-up to the final plan, was very focused on land use and other issues of physical planning. Traditional municipal sectors, such as welfare services for different groups of the population, traffic, housing, businesses and employment are each dealt with individually in the 1986 plan. Spatially the plan divides the municipality into distinct neighbourhoods, each of which is systematically assessed in terms of strengths, weaknesses and potential future development. The provision of facilities, such as schools, childcare, leisure services and housing for elderly people are discussed in terms of future development in particular.

This first municipal plan is very much in the general context of the first generation of municipal plans, which were found to “place great focus on traditional land use planning”<sup>25</sup> (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 1999:22). This is perhaps explained both by the fact this was a relatively new ‘tool’, as well as the general lack of economic growth in this period. Municipalities were generally “preoccupied with getting limited resources to link to the demands for municipal services, and there was a very hard fight between the municipalities over getting a part of the limited growth”<sup>26</sup> (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 1999:22). However despite this there was still relative freedom for municipalities to interpret how they would like to ‘use’ the municipal plan, as it gave “many possibilities to fulfil the different needs of municipalities”<sup>27</sup> (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 1999:23).

The next municipal plan is from 1996. This municipal plan was again produced under slightly different planning legislation, and from the time of this plan onwards revisions were legally necessary at least every four years. This plan and the documents related to it focus on a wide variety of functional sectors, similar to the 1986 plan, with descriptions of the ‘status’ of these sectors and expected development. The future is viewed mainly in terms of expected changes in demography, infrastructure and the context of wider societal changes.

This municipal plan also came in a slightly changed context for municipal planning generally, with the national planning board stating that:

“The need for a direct connection to land use planning - including the case-oriented local planning and building permission - does not exist any longer. We have the *physical* municipal plan in the municipalities. We got that in the beginning or middle of the 1980s. Now it is about realising the *development-oriented* municipal plan.”<sup>28</sup> (Miljøministeriet 1991:75, original emphasis)

Therefore there should be some expectation that the 1996 municipal plan is of a slightly different character than the 1986 municipal plan, with this general growing focus on ‘development’ over ‘land-use’.

This was followed by a new municipal plan in 2001. Although this plan still covered all the wider sectors featured in the 1986 and 1996 plans, it also had a

greater focus on the city centre of Vejle, sectors such as culture and leisure, and generally the ‘attractiveness’ of the municipality. The work of Vejle Municipality was also conceived in a greater sense in terms of cooperation with other municipalities and the surrounding area more generally.

The most recent plan which I have analysed is from 2009. This plan has yet again been produced under different circumstances, in two fairly important ways contextually. Firstly the plan is from the ‘new’ Vejle Municipality, a larger entity created in the 2007 municipal reform. Therefore this is a plan for a larger and more varied spatial unit than the previous three, including a number of smaller towns and areas of open countryside which were previously separate municipalities or under the jurisdiction of the now-disbanded county authority. The second change in circumstances here is more specific to Vejle and its region, in that the ‘main structure’ portion of the municipal plan was produced jointly with the ‘Triangle Area’, a grouping of Vejle, Fredericia and Kolding municipalities. Vejle Municipality then produced its own individual ‘goals and framework’ document. It is the latter of these documents on which I base the majority of this analysis.

### Story-Line One - the Role of the Municipality



Figure 6.2 - Shifts in the Role of Municipality Story-Line.

In this story-line I have interpreted a shift in the municipality’s perception of their role through municipal planning. This is significant in terms of a change in the agency which the municipality imagines for itself. This moves from a fairly limited role in development in the 1980s to a much wider view in the 1990s. This story-line is also linked to the other two which I interpret in this analysis, where I demonstrate the increasing ‘range’ of vision and focuses of development of the

municipality. Furthermore, this changing role of the municipality is connected to the wider socio-economic context of the period, moving from economic downturn to a period of relative affluence.

In 1986, the role of municipal plan seems rather limited. Both in terms of the substantive focus areas of the municipal plan, and also in terms of the statements made about the role of the municipal plan and the municipality itself. In particular there are references to a limited budget in the municipality, and how this will affect the projects which are implemented. It is in fact stated in 1982 that many of the initiatives being proposed will have to be funded at least partially by the municipality's residents, as there are "somewhat more limited"<sup>29</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1982:6) economic possibilities compared to previous years. This quite specific financial concern is also related to a more general conception of the municipality's agency and how much municipal planning can control. Although it is stated at the beginning of the 1986 plan that "planning of development over the next 8-12 years cannot be limited to physical land use"<sup>30</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1986:19), the plan takes its point of departure in land use and physical planning issues. It is acknowledged that even within this area the municipality has a limited ability to influence developments. For example, with regard to the location of workplaces in Vejle, it is stated that "the city council only has limited influence", and that this is dependent "first and foremost on the condition of the market in society"<sup>31</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1982:10). Therefore the development of the municipality is viewed very much as related to uncontrollable contextual circumstances.

By the time the 1996 municipal plan is under development, this limited view of the municipality's and municipal planning's role is already being reframed, although not entirely changed. In the 1994 report on municipal planning, it is stated that development in Vejle is influenced by external factors "such as economic development, legislation and international relations, which the municipality cannot control"<sup>32</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1994a:4), which is similar to much of the statements made in relation to the 1986 plan. However there is a growing sense of change in the role of municipal planning and the municipality, in that there is also a view that it is was important to think about what the long-term



focuses of the municipality should be (Vejle Kommune 1989). Furthermore, the municipality should simultaneously express its agency in that it is important in saying no to things which did not fit with these focuses (Vejle Kommune 1989).

The reframing of this story-line is particularly noticeable with regard to business development. Whereas there was a sense in the 1986 plan that this was very much on the whim of 'the market', in the 1996 municipal plan and its associated publications there is a broader view of business development than simply providing land for businesses. For example, the geographical situation of Vejle "gives really extraordinary possibilities, which ought to be used"<sup>33</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1989:16), and there is also a qualified labour force, good educational opportunities, childcare, housing, leisure facilities and other elements which could make Vejle attractive for businesses. Furthermore, the municipality is attributing itself some responsibility in the development of particular business sectors, stating that they should "choose and focus on sectors which will give good workplaces"<sup>34</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1989:16). Particular sectors are named, including foodstuffs, IT and the environmental industry. Physical improvement to business locations are still a topic in the plan, but this seems to be leaning more towards "visual beautification" of business areas for the "wellbeing and growth"<sup>35</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:27) of businesses, and the city centre should be made into a "dynamic business environment"<sup>36</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:28). Therefore the municipality and the role of municipality has been reframed in terms of greatly increasing the range of actions which are possible and legitimate in sectors such as this.

In the 2001 and 2009 municipal plans this story-line has been reframed again, but rather than radically changing the rationalities expressed in the 1996 municipal plan, the reframing builds upon them. In both of these recent municipal plans the municipality and the municipal plan have been attributed the role of a 'visionary'. In 2001 every chapter of the plan begins with a 'vision', and few of the limitations from the 1980s seem to remain. The general vision of the municipality in 2001 is:

“Vejle is a good place to reside and live, but the city council has the vision that it can become even better. Vejle should be a healthy and environmentally-correct society, where residents have the best opportunities for wellbeing and health.”<sup>37</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:4)

The ‘achievement’ of this is envisaged through a focus on five areas: the city centre, sustainable development, culture, children's’ lives and the lives of the elderly. Each of the chapters of the plan begins with a vision statement, showing certain ambitions about the future of Vejle and its people.

In the 2009 plan the ‘visionary’ role is still strong, although the vision itself has been shortened to the more minimalist “Knowledge, Growth and Welfare”<sup>38</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:9). This is a vision which the municipal plan should help implement through “concrete area planning”<sup>39</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:9) - therefore there is a desire to link this slightly lofty ‘visionary’ role to more mundane practices of municipal planning.

Within the 2009 plan the main reframing of the ‘visionary’ role is the idea that common visions between a range of municipal actors are necessary. This is most likely due to the context of the municipal plan, as the first plan in a new, larger municipality. For example, with regard to the policy for the more rural areas, it is stated that goals will “only be reached if residents, associations, business, consumers and the municipality work together from a common visions”<sup>40</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:13).

In summary, this story-line of the role of municipal planning and the municipality more generally has shifted from a fairly limited conception, where physical land use was the key concern, to a much more ‘unlimited’ idea of the municipality as a visionary for the future. This is linked to the wider context of changing economic times, and also to the generally changing nature of the municipal plan in Denmark, which has shifted in this period from a fairly strict physical planning document to a broader, development-oriented document.

### Story-Line Two - the Range of Vision of the Municipality

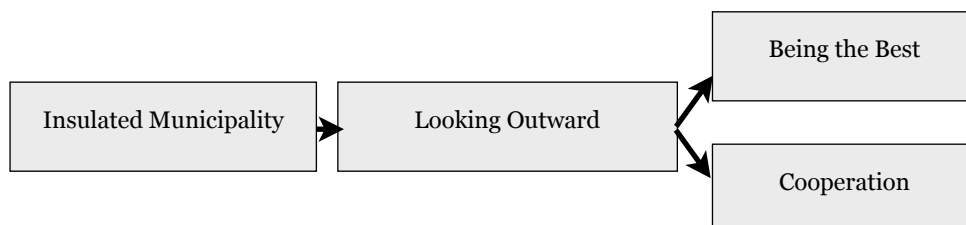


Figure 6.3: Shifts in the Range of Vision of the Municipality Story-Line.

This second story-line in municipal planning is based on the ‘range’ of vision of the municipality and the municipal plan. By this ‘range’, I am referring to the societal and spatial areas to which the municipal plan relates. This shifts from a very internal, somewhat isolated view, to a much broader and selectively contextual view. It does not mean the geographical boundaries of the municipality are changing, but rather there are shifts in the way in which areas and sectors outside the municipal boundaries gain a greater role in the understanding of the municipality.

In 1986, along with an idea that the municipality had limited powers in certain areas, there was also an emphasis on various ‘external’ changes and problems. This view on issues and problems leads to a feeling of resignation, that the municipality can simply respond to these things rather than influence them. It is also related to the major focus of the municipal plan on fairly substantive land use and physical planning issues within the municipality.

There are a number of broader issues referred to in the 1986 municipal plan, such as demographic change, changing working habits, unemployment and the economy. These changes are framed as being external, and the municipality’s role is then to respond to them. For example, in terms of demographic changes, the focus is on an increasing number of elderly people and a decreasing number of children, and the response to this is related to the changing provision of welfare services. Housing is another area where the perspectives in the municipal plan are strongly related to responding to demographic change, in terms of the types of people who are expected to live in different areas. Through focusing on

population projections, the municipality is able to show how they will respond with certain types of housing and service provision. This general change is therefore interpreted in terms of quite clear local policies as a response.

There is also a wider perspective on changes in society in terms of work habits and increases in leisure time, which again is viewed in terms of the potential effects on municipal services. There is a general idea that “development in society means that the need for, amongst other things, institutions as well as culture and sports facilities is greater than ever before”<sup>41</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1982:14). This is quite a vague statement, however, it is based on an idea that leisure time will be increasing and people’s work habits will change, particularly based on an increased use of IT which means that work will change in terms of “where and when it happens”<sup>42</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1986:20). This might also require the municipality “to think in new ways, across the boundary between private and public services and across traditional boundaries”<sup>43</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1986:20). Again the idea of external changes, and the need for the municipality to respond to these in certain ways, is clear.

Two final ‘external’ issues which are presented around the 1986 municipal plan are unemployment and changes in the market. Unemployment is discussed in the 1982 debate paper, as at that time unemployment in Vejle was higher than the Danish and county average (Vejle Kommune 1982). This is conceptualised as a wider societal problem, where the municipality itself has limited influence. There is the tentative statement that “[e]ven though the problem is created in society, in Vejle we can perhaps stimulate more local initiatives and use untraditional solutions to create new workplaces and through that get more people into work”<sup>44</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1982:6). The market and economy are generally viewed as external to the municipality as well. The knock-on effect of this is a lack of belief in the capacity of the municipality to develop businesses, linked to the first storyline. In 1982 it is stated that the municipality is “dependent on if private companies want to invest, and that is dependent on the economic and political situation in society”<sup>45</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1982:6). The main element which the municipality can influence is conceived as the availability of land for businesses. There is some acknowledgement that the municipality could influence wider

conditions which might be a part of a “foundation which can pull firms to the city”<sup>46</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1982:10), such as transport and public services. However, there is a general reservedness when it comes to the ability of the municipality itself to affect economic and political conditions. By the final version of the municipal plan in 1986 this has developed slightly, and there is a greater assuredness that the municipality can influence businesses, but only in terms of providing “the best possible conditions for the local business community, so it can carry out renewal and maintain the necessary dynamism”<sup>47</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1986:29). The idea of supporting particular business sectors also appears in 1986, with a general idea that it might be possible to have business policies which reduce the sensitivity of Vejle’s business community to the market.

Moving toward the 1996 municipal plan, the view outside the boundaries of the municipality is wider, also notably in terms of looking outside of Denmark. It becomes clearer that “Vejle Municipality is small in area, but centrally placed in a bigger picture”<sup>48</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1989:4). The idea that distances are shrinking, and the effects that this may have on Vejle, is one clear idea. For example Vejle is considered well-situated in terms of routes between Northern Denmark, Copenhagen and Hamburg, with the wishful thinking that “[w]ithin the next 10 years it will be only 2 hours by train to Copenhagen, Frederikshavn and Hamburg”<sup>49</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1989:4). This is also related to an idea that people are willing to travel further, both for work and for leisure.

In this period the shift in the range of vision of the municipality seems to be particularly related to the European Community, which is understandable in terms of the increasing European integration in the beginning of the 1990s and the opening up of Eastern Europe. Municipal planning and changes in the municipality are also related to macro trends such as the movement of production abroad and the expectation that new technologies will lead to a decreasing demand for business premises. A 1994 debate publication states that the ‘international perspective’ on Vejle is a key theme for the new municipal plan, and there is optimism that the municipality has “a good point of departure to make its mark internationally”<sup>50</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1994b:9). This is mainly in terms of having internationally-known companies and being a ‘nodal point’ for transport.

A view on Vejle in an ‘international’ perspective is also emerging at this time, for example Vejle and the surrounding ‘Triangle Area’ should be “a national and international meeting place for the business community, research, development and education”<sup>51</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1994b:10). The local area is also becoming a bigger part of the municipality’s range of vision, and there is a desire to be “an active municipality in the region”<sup>52</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:40). This is related to a desire to “attract, influence and develop the business community in the municipality and the whole Triangle Area”<sup>53</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:40). Cooperation in this way is part of the development of the external-orientation of Vejle Municipality, and is something which strengthens from this period onward.

Through the 1980s and in the 1990s the story-line of the municipality’s range of vision has increased, from a dichotomy between changes which are ‘external’ and the substantive local policy responses, to a wider view on the municipality as part of a more regional and even international world and the desire to create development in the municipality in that context. In the 2001 municipal plan this story-line has developed into two distinct tracks. Firstly, there is an extroverted and comparative focus on ‘being the best’, in terms of Vejle Municipality’s ‘position’ in relation to other places. Secondly, there is another outward-looking focus on ‘cooperation’, such as the aforementioned Triangle Area, but also in other areas and across public-private boundaries. These two tracks show both the reframing of this story-line with a greater orientation to the world beyond the municipality, however it also shows a potential tension between wanting to be ‘better’ than other places and working together with them.

The ‘being the best’ idea which emerges strongly in the 2001 municipal plan shows a consciousness of Vejle’s ‘position’, particularly relative to other municipalities. There are numerous examples of this desire to excel, both in terms of brief mentions and in more comprehensive policy ideas. A large variety of sectors of the municipality’s work are being framed in this competitive manner, including retail, business development, the natural environment and being a pleasant place to live. Vejle should be “a leading commercial and service city”<sup>54</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1999:3). It should be “the place one would most like to live”<sup>55</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:9) and a “cultural power centre”<sup>56</sup> (Vejle Kommune

2001:11). It seems that Vejle Municipality would like to excel in all areas, and policies such as the strengthening of cultural facilities in the city centre are justified using these kinds of terms.

There is also an emphasis on not just being the best, but being a model to learn from. This is seen particularly in mentions of the environmental sector, where the metaphor of “Vejle as a front-runner”<sup>57</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:5) is used. Here it is quite explicit that Vejle wants to show the way in terms of dealing with nature and the environment, that “[o]ur experiences and knowledge should be disseminated for the benefit of others”<sup>58</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:5). This is part of a desire to be “a national learning example of how growth and development can happen ecologically, naturally and environmentally-defensibly”<sup>59</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:7). Therefore the determination to be the best is here exemplified by an aspiration to be known throughout Denmark for their environmentally-friendly mode of growth.

This desire to ‘be the best’ is often in relation to an undefined other, as in the case of several of the general examples given above. However, in some sectors, for example with regard to retailing, there is clearer idea of who Vejle’s ‘opponents’ are. Vejle “has traditionally been the most attractive commercial city”<sup>60</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1999:27) in the region, however it is specified that a new shopping centre in Kolding, a nearby city, may be threatening this position. This fear of losing their ‘leading’ status is linked to a need to renew the city centre, to ensure that Vejle continues to be “an exciting commercial city”<sup>61</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1999:28). This is at times linked to very specific policies, for example a plan to renovate the pedestrian area in the city centre is linked to a desire to keep Vejle “the Triangle Area’s most dynamic commercial centre”<sup>62</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:9), again with explicit reference to the competition from neighbouring cities. This has also links with the next thread of this story-line, cooperation, as it highlights some of the potential tensions between a focus on cooperation and these aspirations to ‘be the best’.

The second track of this story-line, interpreted from around the 2001 municipal plan, is ‘cooperation’, although this was already a theme in earlier municipal

plans, however by 2001 this had developed further than individual projects. The 'Triangle Area' is an interesting place to begin with this story-line, not least because in terms of 'being the best', the municipalities in this area seem to be Vejle's most clear competitors. In the 2001 municipal plan a desire is expressed to think of this area as functioning as a single city, with "business structure, educational opportunities, infrastructure services, experiences and facilities on a level with the country's big cities"<sup>63</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:28). Therefore at this regional level, there is a desire to 'compete' with the larger cities of Denmark. The potential conflict here with Vejle's desire to be the best goes unmentioned. Another formal cooperation project which forms part of this story-line is the so-called 'Green Network', which focuses on sustainable development. Again cooperation is being conceptualised as a win-win state of affairs, not in conflict with other ambitions.

The story-line of cooperation also stretches further than these organised projects with specific partners. There is an unspecified desire to work with other partners beyond the municipal boundary, however in terms of a desire to "strengthen the natural hinterland for commerce, the labour force, education and culture"<sup>64</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:28). Therefore here cooperation is desirable, but in a rather inward-looking manner, in terms of developing the region which 'naturally' looks towards Vejle as the major settlement.

There is also a weaker focus on competition outside the immediate region around Vejle, particularly in terms of the EU. There is a determination "to assert ourselves in international contexts, for example through friendship city cooperations, EU projects, international business-related marketing, sports and cultural arrangements"<sup>65</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:29). Although the majority of the cooperation which is discussed is related to the local area, there does exist this idea of cooperation beyond that, albeit it in a more general manner, and most likely often related to the availability of funding opportunities for the sorts of projects mentioned.

Altogether this second story-line of municipal planning has been reframed from a rather internal, inward-looking focus, where greater changes were conceptualised



as occurring externally to the municipality, to a much wider-looking view, where the 'outside world' became something with which Vejle should both compare itself and cooperate. Despite the reframing of this story-line to this much wider range of vision, the real focus of the 'world outside Vejle' seems to be the local region. This is intrinsically linked to the shifts in the previous story-line, as the 'insulated' view is bound up with a story-line of a lack of municipal agency to instigate change. The broader and more extroverted view of the municipality is then related to a story-line of greater belief in the municipality's power to affect change.

### **Story-Line Three - the Focus of Development in the Municipality**



Figure 6.4: Shifts in the Focus of Development of the Municipality Story-Line.

The third story-line which I have interpreted over the last 30 years is related to the focus of the municipal plan and municipal development generally. This story-line is initially related to questions of spatial and social equality, in the way in which land use and physical planning can provide equality of access to services and equal standards of housing to various groups.

In the 1986 plan, social equality is particularly evident in the discussion of housing in the municipality, where there is a stated need for housing for different types of people. A particular social issue is the renewal of apartments in the city centre, where a concern is expressed that this will raise rents and price-out weaker groups. There is also a desire to have a greater variety of people living in the city centre, such as young families, however it is not specified how this might be achieved. Equality between age groups is also raised, in terms of the need for

greater levels of services for the ageing population and the perceived danger that “freezing the existing levels of expenditure will cause favouritism towards children and young people at the cost of possibilities to uphold the level of services for the elderly”<sup>66</sup> (1986:19). Social equality is also implicitly evident in the discussion of transport in the municipality, which broadly focuses on cycle paths, public transport and conditions for pedestrians.

Spatial equality is also evident in the 1986 plan in the discussion of each of the municipality’s neighbourhoods. The 1986 municipal plan divides the municipality into 17 geographical areas, which are viewed as small communities, each of which is a “more or less independent functional area with regard to services and culture”<sup>67</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1986:7). These areas are all summarised according to their housing characteristics and social services, with it being noted where certain things are deemed to be lacking. In the 1982 debate publication this type of assessment is also evident, and whilst different socio-economic characteristics are recognised, the ‘problems’ and facilities needed in each area are viewed similarly across all areas (Vejle Kommune 1982).

Within this plan judgements are generally made for every area of the municipality with regard to services, related to some undefined ‘average’, with the implication that all areas should have an equality of service provision. Although there are of course many different reasons for this differentiation, for example proximity to the city centre, the point is the municipality’s desire to assess the service provision throughout the municipality and the story-line is that there should be a spatial equality of service provision. This relates not just to the public services the municipality has responsibility for, such as schools, but also ‘private facilities’ such as shopping areas.

Therefore surrounding the 1986 municipal plan this is a story-line which generally emphasises the equality of the municipality, both in terms of service provision across different areas of the municipality and across different groups of people in the municipality. Although it is recognised that this equality does not necessarily exist at the current time, the importance of this story-line is the acceptance that this equality should be striven for. This is envisaged in a fairly functional way, for

example in terms of providing the same levels of childcare in all areas, so it remains within the functional focus of this municipal plan.

In 1996 the story-line is undergoing a reframing. Although these broad areas of interest, such as housing and provision of services, are still very much part of the municipal plan, there are new areas which are beginning to take some of the substantive focus. Leisure has become a strong theme, with the addition of the somewhat unclear concept of 'experiences'. This is first mentioned in the 1989 debate publication, where it is stated that people are willing to travel greater distances for leisure as well as work, "because we demand ever greater substance and experiences"<sup>68</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1989:5). Areas for recreation and the consequences of increased leisure time on housing needs are also discussed. Recreational areas are mainly discussed in terms of the natural environment, such as the fjord and forest areas, and the possibilities these offer in giving "experiences, variety and many opportunities for expression"<sup>69</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1989:12).

In the 1996 municipal plan other sectors are added to this idea of experiences and leisure, such as art and culture. This involves an emphasis on the city centre, which should be "pulsating and rich in in experiences"<sup>70</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:21) as well as "lively and exciting"<sup>71</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:23) in terms of culture and tourism. Experiences should include events which "make the city more fun"<sup>72</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:24), both for visitors and for those living in Vejle. Culture in particular has gained a greater role in this reframing of leisure and experiences. Culture is now viewed as a key part of a "high quality of life for Vejle's citizens"<sup>73</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:36). There is an emphasis on planning a sort of 'atmosphere' for the city, and culture should be "something that can be immediately seen, heard and felt"<sup>74</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:36), as well as providing the "adhesive" which will "create a lively and interesting connection between the city and citizens' lives"<sup>75</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:36). Therefore culture has come to mean much more than simply museums and libraries, and it is also being attributed a major role in the life of the city and its residents. The municipality even goes so far as stating that culture is a "welfare-good, on a par with other public services"<sup>76</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:36). In the 1986 municipal

plan leisure and culture was one sector where cuts were expected (Vejle Kommune 1986), but now culture has been raised to the status of a public welfare service, apparently essential to the wellbeing of the citizens. The theme of leisure and experiences seems to be so much more than a shift in society to people having more free time, rather it is a shift of the role of leisure and experiences in peoples' lives and a shift in the role of these in the development of the municipality as well. Vejle has ambitions to bring culture "above a national cultural level"<sup>77</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:39), with the metaphor of culture as a "locomotive"<sup>78</sup> (Vejle Kommune 1996:37) of development.

This reframing of the focus of the development of the municipality, towards a 'leisure society' and a need to provide residents, tourists and visitors with 'experiences', seems to indicate a more ephemeral shift in municipal planning. This reframing emphasises a role for the municipality in creating a certain kind of 'exciting' and 'fun' atmosphere in the city, which is very different to the functional issues of municipal planning, such as planning for housing and traffic. 'Culture' has also a key role within this story-line, and is even conceived as being important in driving development of the municipality generally.

In both the 2001 and 2009 municipal plans, the framing of development in terms of 'experiences' has continued, again in particular relation to the 'culture' sector:

"Vejle should be a city with a varied and lively sporting and cultural community, where we can experience the influence of sport, art and culture on the city and its life."<sup>79</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:14)

Therefore culture is something which should be 'experienced' in the urban environment. As with several of the story-lines, experiences should be particularly evident in the city centre. Here the "urban environment" should be improved to "create more life and experiences around the day and all year, through dense urban development and facilities of high architectural quality"<sup>80</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:9). Therefore here part of the 'experience' of urban life should be through the buildings and a particular type of architecture in the city centre. The retail sector is also important, and the "shopping environment" should also offer "positive experiences"<sup>81</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:9). This is once

again related to the design of the city centre which shoppers will ‘experience’ as they “move around the pedestrian streets, up the side streets and walk through alleys, covered passageways and squares”<sup>82</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2001:9). A particular design of the city centre is therefore deemed necessary to create the ‘right experience’ for the consumer.

In 2009 the ‘experiences’ reframing has extended to even more sectors of the municipality, and is used in reference to culture, tourism, the natural environment and economic growth generally. ‘Experiences’ are also seen as an element which should bind sectors like these together, for example as shown in the statement: “We are connecting attractions, nature, environment and culture together in new experiences”<sup>83</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:9). With regard to specific sectors, experiences are conceptualised both in the tourism industry, which might be expected, and in terms of more general business development. In tourism, the “experience economy’s growth potential”<sup>84</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:13) should be used, and the business community should cooperate with other sectors, such as the cultural community, in “promoting inspiring and innovative experiences”<sup>85</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:11).

Experiences are also envisaged as qualities which the municipality and specific projects within it possess, and which should be developed further. For example:

“The municipality contains big experience values, whose potential are not fully used today. This is valid for the Jelling monuments, and also for the river valley, that both give opportunities for active holidays and cultural tourism. But the harbour, Vejle City and the coast also have development potential.”<sup>86</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:12)

Therefore these particular areas and features of the municipality should be developed in terms of ‘experiences’, which is viewed as an inherent ‘potential’ they have to be harnessed. The town of Jelling is brought up again, as a place which “wants to utilise its attractions by also making the town an experience for residents and visitors, with exciting squares, shops and places to pause”<sup>87</sup> (Vejle

Kommune 2009:12). Therefore here the ‘experiences’ are there for the taking, if the initiative is taken to develop them.

Urban design is again apparent, as it has been in a number of story-lines in several of the municipal plans, and it is also evident elsewhere in terms of offering ‘experiences’. For example an area of Vejle city previously used in connection with rail freight “should be made into an active part of the city centre with opportunities for many types of experiences”<sup>88</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:12). Furthermore these ‘experiences’ are not just desirable, they must be provided as consumers ‘expect’ them, as is stated with regard to the city centre and retailing:

“The shopping streets and the shops should be made more beautiful and their special character and atmosphere should be developed, so shopping centres emerge with a strong profile, where the shops, pedestrian streets, places and squares, cafes and restaurants support each other and give the mixture of experiences which visitors expect.”<sup>89</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:12)

This idea that experiences are ‘expected’ both naturalises this policy of city centre beautification, and also creates a pressure to follow such plans through, as it seems there is no alternative but to provide what these consumers apparently want.

Finally the natural environment is linked to experiences, and “[a]ll the citizens in the municipality should have the opportunity to experience nature and move around in nature”<sup>90</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:15), a wish which is linked to a ‘need’ for improved path systems and recreational facilities. These ‘experiences’ of the natural environment are also viewed as contributory to “an increased quality of life in daily life”<sup>91</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:15). Perhaps most extreme is the idea that ‘experiences’ are a value of the natural environment, which is shown in a focus on the river valley leading to Vejle Fjord. This should be “marketed as a collective concept around the key values: Nature, Culture, Experiences”<sup>92</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:13). This focus on the natural environment and experiences also shows how broadly the focus on experiences goes, covering many sectors of the municipality’s work.

In 2009 there is another reframing of the direction of municipal development, which runs parallel to and has discursive affinities with 'experiences'. This is a focus on 'creativity', a reframing which developed quite distinctively in the 2009 municipal plan. It is not always particularly clear what is meant by this word, however it appears in a variety of contexts related to business development and culture, and also as an attribute of a group of people who are desirable within Vejle Municipality.

The focus on creativity with regard to business development and the economy is one of the most obvious directions. In the following paragraph it is evident that 'creative businesses' are deemed essential to the desire for Vejle to 'make its mark' and stand out.

"Vejle wants to make its mark nationally and internationally in business promotion and knowledge development. Therefore Vejle will continue to be Denmark's leading entrepreneurship city, leading in development of creative business promotion initiatives, in front in the ethnic entrepreneurship environment, and not least innovative work in all areas of business and knowledge development. Vejle wants to be a lighthouse for creative and innovative businesses by making visible and supporting their creative potential."<sup>93</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:10)

'Creative businesses' are being attributed roles far greater than 'just' economic growth, in that they should also "promote innovation, partly in other companies, partly in economic growth and partly in a more exciting and culturally lively city and a positive branding of Vejle, that is again related to making Vejle an attractive residential municipality for citizens and newcomers"<sup>94</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:11). Therefore the role of the creative business is also to make the city 'exciting' and 'lively', as well as contribute to an attractive image. This undefined concept is being attributed a lot of influence in the municipality, and it is also clear that creative businesses are viewed as solely positive contributors to the development of the municipality in a variety of ways.

However 'creativity' is not seen as just an attribute of individual businesses, but an essential part of the "modern knowledge economy" where "creativity, knowledge

and the ability to translate knowledge to products and services are amongst the most crucial competitive parameters to manage in the global competition”<sup>95</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009:11). Therefore here ‘creativity’ is a parameter for competitiveness, prioritising its ‘essential’ role in the municipality.

The reframing of this story-line over the last 30 years shows how the focus of municipal planning has in several ways become more specific and limited. From a broad, egalitarian focus in the 1980s, municipal planning seems to have shifted to more specific discourses of development, such as ‘experiences’ and ‘creativity’. These more specific focuses are however naturalised and legitimate a focus on aesthetics, the city centre, certain types of businesses and certain groups of people. Again this is part of a wider shift in what constitutes a ‘municipal plan’ in Denmark, but it also shows the changing issues which are deemed valid for consideration in such a plan.

## Conclusions

In this chapter I have interpreted three story-lines which have been reframed over the last 30 years in Vejle Municipality, and which show shifting ideas in municipal planning. These three story-lines also show a growing competitiveness-orientation, as Vejle Municipality begins to view itself and the process of municipal planning in terms of visions, looking outward, and on particular modes of development. The shifts in these story-lines are not occurring in a vacuum, in that there should be an acknowledgement of a changing economic and social context within which the municipality is situated. Furthermore, in the time period which I have investigated there have been many general changes in Danish municipal planning as well as in Vejle Municipality specifically. Yet within this context, these three story-lines illustrate the changes within municipal planning in Vejle Municipality.

The first story-line I have interpreted as changing over this period shows how municipal planning in Vejle has shifted from being a fairly limited activity,



confined mainly to issues of physical planning within the municipality, to a situation in which municipal planning and the municipality are deemed to have a much broader role in terms of proactively envisioning the future development. This story-line is strongly linked to the other two which I have interpreted, as the municipality becomes 'visionary' and less limited in both the topics which municipal planning addresses and in the agency which the municipality is deemed to hold.

The second story-line is focused on the range of vision or orientation of municipal planning. Initially municipal planning is focused on issues within the boundaries of Vejle Municipality, whereas later more places and areas are brought in as the municipality seems to become more 'extroverted'. This occurs both in terms of 'cooperation' and in terms of a desire to be 'better' than other places in various areas. The latter part of this story-line resonates with the 'leading Denmark' story-line I discussed in the previous chapter. Within this story-line there are potential tensions, particularly in terms of the local region where Vejle would like to be 'better' than its neighbouring municipalities, at the same time as desiring stronger cooperation with them.

The third and final story-line I have interpreted through this analysis is related to specialisation on particular modes of development, which become greater themes in the later plans. This relates both to a general desire to be an 'attractive' municipality, but also to particular sectors such as leisure, culture, 'creativity' and 'experiences'.

The shifts in these three story-lines demonstrate that a competitiveness-orientation is something relatively new in municipal planning in Vejle Municipality, and that it has become institutionalised in municipal planning in recent years. As the plans from the 1980s and the 1990s show in particular, Vejle Municipality has not always focused on competitive topics in their municipal planning. These findings are a major point in terms of considering 'competitiveness' more critically, as it demonstrates that this is not some natural state of planning, and that it has become institutionalised in municipal planning in a short time. I will continue this analysis in the next chapter, as I take up the

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three story-lines of a visionary municipality, an extroverted municipality and an attractive municipality, and investigate how they are understood and institutionalised across Vejle Municipality today.



# **CHAPTER SEVEN**

## **STORY-LINES OF COMPETITIVENESS IN VEJLE MUNICIPALITY TODAY**

### **Introduction**

This analytical chapter follows on from the previous chapter, focusing again on the three story-lines which I interpreted through their development over the last 30 years. These three story-lines were about the role of the municipality, the 'range of vision' of the municipality, and the focus on development in the municipality. Within this chapter I am no longer looking at the change of these story-lines, but rather on their institutionalised position and the various understandings of competitiveness which lie within these story-lines and associated metaphors across the municipal organisation. The analysis in this chapter aims to answer the research question: how are competitiveness-oriented story-lines framed and institutionalised across the contemporary organisation of Vejle Municipality?

The first story-line, which I will refer to as the 'visionary' story-line, is also reflected in a strong sense of 'ambition' throughout the municipality's departments. This is related to a specific metaphor, of 'being seen from the

moon', which has been strong in Vejle Municipality, but not uncontested. Not only are policies and projects particularly ambitious, but many of the actors also place a great emphasis on the mode of acting within the municipality as ambitious, with the importance of 'daring' to do certain things being prioritised.

The second story-line, which I refer to here as the 'extroverted' story-line, is interpreted further in this chapter in terms of where and who the municipality are looking towards. This also highlights a focus on rankings and 'benchmarking', in terms of a general interest in where the municipality is positioned in relation to other municipalities. This is also related to a metaphor of 'healthy competitiveness', a metaphor which facilitates a certain ambiguity in understanding competition, as it implies that it is 'good' for the municipality, irrespective of who the actual 'competitors' might be.

The third story-line is the 'attractiveness' story-line, based around the focus of development of the municipality. Within this, as also reflected in the previous chapter, there is a focus on particular modes of development, as well as particular groups of people and businesses, which is common across a number of the municipality's departments despite their difference sectoral focuses. This story-line is more diffuse in character than the other two, which is also reflected in the lack of a strong metaphor to accompany the story-line.

The analysis presented in this chapter is based on publications including policy statements and information booklets from a number of sectors of the municipal organisation (a complete list of documents is found in the primary sources). It is also based on interviews with civil servants in each relevant department, as well as two of the politicians who head political committees related to several of these departments (a complete list of interviewees and their positions is found in the primary sources). The sectors in question in this chapter are the Technical Department, the Culture & Citizens' Services Department, the Nature and Environment Department, the Development Secretariat and Vejle Business Development. These sectors were selected gradually throughout the case study, as those which produced particularly notable strategies and visions, all of which bore some relevance to the spatial development of the municipality. There are three

departments in Vejle Municipality which were not included in the analysis, and these are: Children and Young People; Labour Market and Adults; Health and the Elderly.

## **The Visionary Story-Line**

In the previous chapter, the story-line about the municipality's agency was shown to shift from a fairly limited idea of the municipality's role, to a much stronger idea of the municipality as a 'visionary'. Across the municipality, this role is linked to a popular metaphor which is used by some departments as an explicit slogan, and it is also reflected in the 'daring' and 'ambitious' manner in which projects and the actions of actors are characterised.

This ambition is perhaps most notably evident through the use of the metaphor: "Vejle should be seen from the moon". This was thought up in the Technical Department in the old Vejle Municipality in the 1990s as part of a document demonstrating possible projects in the municipality for politicians (Interview HS 2009), and in the new municipality was a central vision in the first electoral period (2007 - 2010), appearing in municipal-wide publications. The metaphor has also spread to other departments, such as Culture & Citizens' Services, where it has also been used in visions and strategies. This metaphor seems to represent the ambition of the municipality both in terms of desire for visibility, and a sense of wanting to be 'known', and in particular the Technical Department's desire for a more literal visibility and attention through architectural, design and other physical projects in urban space. This is explained by a civil servant in the Technical Department mainly in terms of being 'known':

"...it doesn't mean that we literally should be seen from the moon, but that everyone should do their best to be known in Denmark, or internationally"<sup>96</sup> (Interview HS 2009)

The Culture & Citizens' Services Department has explicitly taken up the metaphor as well, however adjusting it to: "Vejle should be seen from the moon and we

should hear the grass growing”<sup>97</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2007a). This latter addition is meant to imply a grassroots element to the department’s visions and strategies, and can be interpreted as an attempt to temper a more extreme metaphor of ambition. A civil servant in this department explains the addition of ‘hearing the grass growing’ to the metaphor as a way of acknowledging the work of people in the community when it comes to culture:

“...so we thought, we also have to have the innovators, and therefore we connected that to it [...] It is just a question of saying that yes, we can be seen from the moon, when we work with culture there are also really a lot of innovators, an impression of voluntarism, and we have to also have space for them. So we brought both parts in.”<sup>98</sup> (Interview HT 2010)

This metaphor has by no means been uncontroversial within the municipality, and not everybody agrees the metaphor itself is useful. One civil servant points out that “there has been an unbelievable, unbelievable amount of discussion about ‘Vejle should be seen from the moon’”<sup>99</sup> (Interview DB 2010), but she puts some of this down to a lack of good communication on the meaning of the metaphor from the municipality’s side. Another civil servant also points out this criticism, yet she also states that it has been useful as it has “so much impact, and was seen so much, so it also became used”<sup>100</sup> (Interview HT 2010), despite the slogan’s origins amongst civil servants rather than politicians.

Vejle also has an official ‘vision’, “Knowledge, Growth and Welfare”; however this ‘vision’ does not seem to evoke the same reactions as the ‘being seen from the moon’ metaphor. As the same civil servant again points out, ‘Knowledge, Growth and Welfare’ is “also really interesting and energy-giving, it is just also used in Helsingør and in Svendborg and in Haderslev [other small cities], it could be that a word is different, but ‘Vejle should be seen from the moon’, many people have seen that and noticed it and talked about it”<sup>101</sup> (Interview HT 2010). Therefore despite its birth amongst civil servants in a single department of the old Vejle Municipality, and its at times controversial nature, there is a recognition that this metaphor gets Vejle noticed in a way that the official ‘vision’ perhaps does not.

One politician is more openly sceptical of the slogan, and believes that not only has it brought too much criticism, but also that ambitions were perhaps too high at times, and there are more basic issues in the municipality which need greater attention.

“I think the ambitions in Vejle after the municipal merger, they were very ambitious, to say it straight. And that is also fine, ambitions are really great. But sometimes there can be such a big distance between the vision and the realities, that it seems totally unrealistic. And I have, I think that one has declared things a bit too strongly in Vejle to be completely honest, with that ‘seen from the moon’.”<sup>102</sup> (Interview DAJ 2010)

This shows, that although ambitions are high in the municipality, this way of working, and the metaphor of ‘being seen from the moon’, is by no means uncontested. However the broader way of thinking, in terms of the idea of having ambitions and being ‘known’, is quite universally accepted.

The central position of this metaphor will not necessarily continue indefinitely, for example it is no longer a slogan for the whole municipality in the new electoral period (from 2009), perhaps because “in the economic times we are now in, it has been toned down”, whereas “knowledge, growth and welfare, it still stands”<sup>103</sup> (Interview KE 2010). Not only is this rather extreme metaphor contested from some sides, it is also potentially on the ‘way out’ in the municipality, which this actor has related to changing economic times and a greater focus on saving public money. The more general idea of ‘being known’, which is one of the points of departure of this metaphor, is however still strong generally in the municipality.

Several interviewees express the desire for the municipality just to be ‘known’, with a belief in the sometimes unspoken benefits of this, for example as it is put by one:

“We are very conscious about how much we are in the air and are visible, and we can nearly let that spread like rings in the water.”<sup>104</sup> (Interview CT 2010).



With regard to culture, it is noted that being known for good projects is something they are very aware of:

“We are very conscious of, that we would like to do something, that is good and especially good, and also that we will become known for”, although it is also important that people living in the municipality also think “that it is cool to be here”<sup>105</sup> (Interview HT 2010).

Others refer to this desire of being known for particular projects in a more concrete manner, for example, one politician believes that instead of looking too much at what others do, he “would rather have, that we work out our own ideas, which we call Vejle models, if we can do that”<sup>106</sup> (Interview PH 2010).

This broader idea of being ‘known’ is particularly institutionalised in the process of municipal branding. In Vejle Municipality this is led through the Development Secretariat, although the 2009 *Branding Strategy* was created in a cross-organisation working group. Here the ‘being seen from the moon metaphor’ is not evident, however many of the understandings associated with it are. This strategy was created following, amongst other things, a number of surveys by a consultancy company, asking people in Vejle and around Denmark what they identified most with Vejle (Vejle Kommune 2008). Generally this “vision project” (Vejle Kommune 2008:3) was described as following:

“The vision project should be seen as an investment in the future and its overall goal is to promote internal cohesion and Vejle’s image to increase the net immigration of citizens and firms, as well as the number of workplaces, and also to increase the average tax base.”<sup>107</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2008:3)

The stated aim of the *Branding Strategy* is as follows:

“Vejle’s vision is knowledge, growth and welfare! Our goal is a position amongst the most attractive municipalities in Denmark. A Vejle that creates the best conditions for development of both businesses and residents.”<sup>108</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009d:3).

Branding as an activity is seen as essential in reaching these goals, as a “strong reputation will give even more people the desire to move to Vejle Municipality, work here, start new businesses, invest in Vejle or just visit the municipality as guests and tourists”<sup>109</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009d:3). This is specified even further, relating this focus on attracting new people and businesses to a ‘need’ for greater tax revenues: “This gives more tax revenue in the municipal purse, and it is necessary if we are to be able to offer residents a high level of service in the future.”<sup>110</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009d:3). The branding strategy is based around the theme of “Denmark was born here”<sup>111</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009d:6), focusing on the history surrounding the ‘Jelling Stones’, a UNESCO World Heritage site situated in one of the smaller towns in the municipality. This is connected to an idea that this is a “totally unique” identity for Vejle Municipality, which “none of the others can copy”<sup>112</sup> (Vejle Municipality 2009d:12). Therefore not only is there an emphasis within the *Branding Strategy* on creating an identity for the new municipality, there is also a desire to create a ‘unique’ identity, which cannot be ‘copied’.

Apart from this explicitly institutionalised focus on being ‘known’, through branding, visibility is a general ambition of a number of the departments of the municipality. The Nature & Environment Department focuses on Vejle being “known because of its special natural and environmental qualities”<sup>113</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009c:4), which is also related to the surveys carried out in connection with the *Branding Strategy*, where nature was a major aspect people identified with Vejle (Vejle Kommune 2008). This is reconfirmed at other points in the vision, for example in a section on business development it is stated that nature and the environment “should contribute to supporting and developing what makes it especially attractive to live and to run a business in Vejle Municipality”<sup>114</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009c:8). This also shows strong connections to the third story-line, where focus is placed on the development of an ‘attractive municipality’.

Aside from the general structuration of the visionary story-line, and the institutionalisation of ‘being known’ through branding, there is also institutionalisation of this discourse through the focus on communication, some of which falls within the remit of the municipality’s Communication Section.

Communication is something on which a focus is placed throughout the different departments and sections of Vejle Municipality, and there is a general feeling that, although they may carry out certain projects and policies, it is equally if not more, important that people within and outside the municipality get to know about these projects and policies.

This story-line is also apparent in what a number of interviewees identify as a culture of 'daring' in the municipality, in terms of how they as civil servants can act. I interpret the idea of 'daring' as being heavily related to being 'visionary', in that it incorporates the same understanding of developing new ideas about the future, although it is more explicitly connected to actions. One civil servant notes that having a focus on working across sectors and in a less traditional manner, which he holds in high regard, is about this 'daring':

"I tend to go back to good old Søren Kirkegaard, in that it is about daring. And it is not just us, it's the politicians, it's the citizens, it is to dare together. To dare is to lose one's footing for a moment, it is to dare to take a step into thin air, and if one does not dare to do that, so Kirkegaard says, it is to lose one's self."<sup>115</sup> (Interview CT 2010)

This civil servant links this to placing a focus on trying new things, stating that "we are very attentive to daring to try new ideas, instead of saying, we've done that, stop it, forget it"<sup>116</sup> (Interview CT 2010)

Another civil servant also identifies 'daring' as an important factor in the municipality's ambitions, basing it on there being a space for civil servants to try new things, in that there is "a long way to the ceiling"<sup>117</sup> (Interview DB 2010) in terms of what civil servants can do. For her, and others, this is also linked to a strong administrative leadership which creates this space. Therefore there is a general feeling, also linked to the leadership of the municipality, that 'daring' to try new things is a positive thing, and that the civil servants have the chance to do this. A third civil servant also underlines this way of thinking, stating that once in a while it is necessary to 'dare' to do things, even though they may seem unpopular initially:

“...sometimes you also have to dare to do something, where one says that now we believe in this idea, and it could be that people, that they complain, and think it is totally crazy”<sup>118</sup> (Interview HS 2009).

For these interviewees, there is a general idea that in Vejle Municipality it is acceptable to try new things, and also there is a value placed on ‘daring’ amongst the civil servants in the municipality. This could also be related to the outlook of some of the civil servants more generally, with a number of the interviewees in leadership positions having private sector backgrounds.

Altogether it seems that being ‘visionary’, which is where I picked up this story-line from the previous chapter, is related to both the way in which the civil servants view their role in developing the municipality, as well as to a general desire to be ‘visible’ as a municipality, both through certain policies and projects which literally and figuratively make the municipality and city ‘visible’ for the rest of Denmark. Although the metaphor of ‘being seen from the moon’ is disputed by some, and is potentially on the cusp of disappearing from the municipality, the rationality behind this metaphor is more generally agreed upon. This story-line is institutionalised through a general culture of making visions and strategies for the different working areas of the municipality, an explicit branding focus, as well as a focus on ‘communicating’ the projects of the municipality to the wider world. These points are also related to the next story-line, which is based around an ‘outward-focus’ of the municipality, in terms of this desire to be ‘visible’ to the ‘wider world’, but also in terms of the way in which this ‘wider world’ is brought into the municipality and used as a point of comparison.

### **The Extroverted Story-Line**

The second story-line which I am analysing in greater depth is that of an ‘extroverted’ municipality. In the previous chapter I analysed a shift in municipal planning from a rather inward orientation, to a wider view on the issues and places which affected the municipality. Analysing this story-line across selected

departments of the municipality, the overall idea of competition with other places is quite clear; yet specifically which places Vejle Municipality might be competing with is more ambiguous. When it is expressed, it is most often in terms of particularly local places, and even competition within the municipality itself. Generally competition is seen as a positive thing, and for some this is related to a metaphor of competition as ‘healthy’. This story-line of looking outward is also interpreted through an interest in ranking and benchmarking, and the general ‘position’ of the municipality in comparison with other places. Therefore although this story-line is very much about looking outward, it is also about how the world outside the municipality’s boundaries is then brought back into the municipality, and used as a point of comparison and inspiration.

As I discussed in terms of the policy-oriented competitiveness literature in chapter two, and as I also noted with regard to national policy in Denmark in chapter five, competitiveness is often used in an introductory and contextual sense, in terms of being a ‘fact’ about the way the world is today. This familiar ‘international competitiveness’ discourse is not so clear when going into detail in Vejle, and places which are closer and more similar to Vejle Municipality come into much sharper focus.

A number of interviewees mention the closest cities of a comparable size, Kolding and Horsens. Some are cautious about the idea of competing and ‘copying’, for example as one interviewee states:

“But one just has to be careful, that one does not copy each other, and say, because Horsens, they have concerts, and they are good at getting Bob Dylan and some big names, so that does not mean we should do it.”<sup>119</sup> (Interview PH 2010)

Others are more general, and just refer places which are nearer or similar as being closer competitors.

“I hear sometimes, that we can compare ourselves with Aarhus [Denmark’s second largest city] and Hamburg. I don’t understand why we should do that. We are not going to become Aarhus. We

are not going to become Hamburg. But what we have to do, is that we have to find the municipalities, that are like us, and so find out, what it is, that they are better at than us in terms of some parameters. However the parameters which we have defined ourselves, those are crucial for us.”<sup>120</sup> (Interview DB 2010)

Some also view competition mainly at a regional level, often with reference to the Triangle Area, as was also mentioned in the previous chapter. It is pointed out by some that at a national level, they would rather businesses come to the Triangle Area generally, however when it is a question of a business locating within the Triangle Area, they would of course prefer this business to come to Vejle. The Triangle Area also presents some potential contradictions with regard to ‘competition’ and ‘cooperation’. This is an official cooperation area for Vejle Municipality, however, it is evident (for example through the *Growth Barometer* reports, which I will discuss in the following section) that Vejle also explicitly compare themselves with the municipalities in this cooperation, particularly Fredericia and Kolding. Whereas several interviewees expressed frustration that sometimes they cannot cooperate more within this area, for example in deciding on a project such as a common large arena, cooperation is also institutionalised through the creation of a common municipal plan with Fredericia and Kolding.

Beyond this local area, other places in Denmark and abroad are also mentioned. There is a general feeling, that although they like to ‘look’ to bigger places, they are not in fact competing with them, simply looking for ‘inspiration’. This is stated in one vision from the Technical Department: “We travel, are inspired and have experiences from other cities around the world”<sup>121</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009e: 2). A notable institutionalisation of looking outward for inspiration is the use of study tours, particularly in the Technical Department and with the Technical Committee, although these study tours are now undertaken by a large variety of the political committees and other groups in the municipality. The Technical Committee and civil servants from the Technical Department have been going on these annual tours for several decades, mainly in Europe, with recent tours to Milan, Oslo and a number of Spanish cities including Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia. These tours mainly involve particular urban projects within these cities,

which provide the participants with inspiration for Vejle. For example, one politician mentions a particular project around a disused railway freight area in Milan, drawing parallels with a similar area in Vejle (Interview PH 2010). These tours are seen as important in that “one has to get out and see what others have done to get some ideas to take further oneself”<sup>122</sup> (Interview PH 2010). A civil servant in the Technical Department sees these tours as important particularly in terms of showing the politicians what is possible (Interview HS 2009), and this is reinforced by the statement from a politician that the outward-looking mentality story-line is linked to the ‘ambition’ and ‘daring’ in Vejle, which I discussed in the previous story-line:

“...I think that is what has given the high ambition levels in Vejle, that we have dared to go out and look at these projects, and tried to realise it when we come home.”<sup>123</sup> (Interview PH 2010).

Therefore here the extroverted focus is not so much about an explicit competition, which can more easily be imagined at a local scale, but is about looking for ‘inspiration’, and getting ideas about different projects which might be possible in Vejle Municipality. Despite all the places which are named in documents and by interviewees, it would be wrong to assume that it was always easy for actors to articulate exactly ‘who’ they might be competing with. Aside from the analysis above, there seems to be a more general understanding of competitiveness removed from any specific idea of defined competitors. A particular metaphor which seems to legitimise this is used by several actors. The metaphor of ‘healthy competition’ (Interview PH 2010; Interview DB 2010) seems to express an idea that competition is something which makes the municipality perform better in a positive manner, or even that it is necessary for the future development of the municipality. The ‘healthy competition’ metaphor also shows the extent generally of the institutionalisation of competitiveness in Vejle. Here a particular metaphor emerges which legitimises competition in itself, without any particular need to define competitors. This is linked to the next aspect of this story-line, which focuses on a quite specific and quantitative way of looking at competitiveness, through rankings or benchmarking of places and sectors within these places.

The use of ranking and benchmarking was one of the key institutionalisations of the national story-line of ‘Denmark versus the world’, and this was also a strong part of the international ‘competitiveness industry’ which I referred to in chapter five. In Vejle Municipality, competitiveness is also apparent in a fondness for indicators and rankings. Within some of the departments, and for some actors, the position of Vejle in various hierarchies is something which is quite evident in documents, as well as amongst interviewees. A particularly extreme example of this is illustrated from Vejle Business Development’s vision:

“Vejle Municipality is amongst the leading in the country and the most agenda-setting:

Vejle is rich in amenity areas

Vejle is the country’s 5th biggest retail city

The 6th biggest municipality in the country

1 of 5 regional capitals

The 9th biggest tourist municipality - situated in the area that attracts the most tourists after Copenhagen

Named by Region Southern Denmark to be the best residential municipality in the whole of Region Southern Denmark.”<sup>124</sup> (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:6)

Here the world is being imagined as a competitive place, where Vejle Municipality needs to attempt to be better than the usually undefined ‘others’ it is competing with. However, the above list also shows the various ways in which they wish to frame the position of the municipality, and the variety of different ways in which they can rank the place. This can be in terms of business development generally, more specific areas such as attracting conferences and meetings, or in terms of retail development and customers. In all these fields the rationality of competitiveness is quite clear through the superlative-laden language used by Vejle Business Development, and the idea that they want to ‘win’.



One specific institutionalisation of benchmarking in the municipality is the *Growth Barometer*, produced once a quarter from statistics mainly from Statistics Denmark. This short report focuses on indicators related to business and employment, and ranks Vejle Municipality alongside the municipalities of Fredericia, Kolding, Horsens and in the more recent reports, Aarhus. In that way these reports also reflect the type of localised competition which was also apparent in interviews, as discussed above.

In interviews, there is a clear idea that rankings and 'benchmarking' are important, both in general references to such rankings, and also in terms of explicit questioning about the use of rankings and benchmarking in the municipality. Several interviewees for example mentioned in passing that Vejle Municipality was "crowned the best residential municipality in Region South Denmark"<sup>125</sup> (Interview DAJ 2010; also Interview HS 2009), as was referred to in the list from the Vejle Business Development strategy referenced above. The success of specific projects is also noted by actors, for example one points out that "Bølgen is about to become Denmark's best housing building this year"<sup>126</sup> (Interview HS 2009).

In terms of the more explicit consideration of ranking and benchmarking, actors range from the unreservedly enthusiastic to the more cautious. One of the politicians shows open enthusiasm, stating:

"Call me 'Mr Benchmark'. I would like more benchmarks. [...] Of course one has to be careful not to be rigid with it, because there are also background variables, that can explain many things. But a good benchmark can explain a lot of things"<sup>127</sup> (Interview DAJ 2010).

For this politician, benchmarking offers a chance to compare municipalities and also give an idea of how civil servants are 'doing'. Many of the civil servants themselves are also keen on ranking and benchmarking. For example, one civil servant is quite enthusiastic about ranking and benchmarking, however, she qualifies her enthusiasm in terms of the idea that they should look mainly at the points where they already have pre-defined goals.

“I think it is unbelievably important to pay attention that we, the public sector in Denmark, that we as public institutions are measured and weighed. I think it is enormously important to acknowledge those conditions.”

“...it is also really positive, right. Because we get something to relate to. We get a frame to put our reality in, and I think that is a strong thing. If it is used, not abused. And for god’s sake it should not be a parameter where we cannot act, it must not be that.”<sup>128</sup>  
(Interview DB 2010)

The majority of the actors interviewed express an enthusiasm for benchmarking, although with some caution that these exercises should not be used without consideration over whether they are related to the more general goals of the municipality.

Overall this story-line of an outward-looking municipality, is shown here to be more complex than simply a view of Vejle Municipality in a world of ‘international competition’. Competitiveness, in terms of explicitly named ‘competitors’, really seems to be a much more local phenomenon, which is perhaps unsurprising as these are the places and municipalities which those working in Vejle Municipality would be expected to be most familiar with. It is also important to note that it was often difficult for actors to express who exactly they might be ‘competing with’, which indicates something of a disjuncture in the understanding of competitiveness. This is connected to a conceptualisation of competitiveness as a good thing in itself, related to a metaphor of competitiveness as ‘healthy’. With the help of a metaphor such as this, ‘competitiveness’ can be detached somewhat from any fixed idea of an actual competition with real competitors, instead focusing on competition and being competitive as something which is intrinsically good for the municipality. Looking beyond the local area, taking ‘inspiration’ from elsewhere is also deemed important, and in particular is institutionalised through the practice of study tours. Finally, there is an interest in the comparative practice of benchmarking and ranking, similar to that which exists at the national level, both in terms of general rankings and benchmarking, and

institutionalised in terms of specific instances which the municipality itself compiles, such as the *Growth Barometer*. There is also a measure of caution from some actors on this practice, in that it could become too overwhelming if every ranking is viewed as important, showing that these comparisons are not being used entirely unreflectively.

### **The Attractiveness Story-Line**

The final story-line I interpreted as changing in the previous chapter showed how the substantive focus of municipal planning had changed. Across the municipality, this can also be seen in terms of a focus on ‘attractiveness’, as well as a recurring focus on particular modes of development, such as the ‘creativity’ and ‘experiences’ ideas, which were also evident in the recent municipal plans. Furthermore the general focus on ‘development’ has been institutionalised across the municipality, both in terms of the visions and strategies which are produced, but also in terms of the organisation of several of the departments, where there are now particular sub-sections which explicitly work with ‘development’. This is in many ways a more diffuse story-line than the previous two which I have discussed in this chapter, which is also reflected in the lack of any clear metaphor to characterise this story-line. Instead, it is focused around ideas of certain types of development as particularly important for economic growth, and the uncritically considered desire to be attractive as a municipality.

‘Attractiveness’ is a concept which receives much focus in Vejle, and it seems that this is a major overall focus of development. Attractiveness is a broad term, and there are a number of different understandings of what it means to be attractive, as well as who or what they are attempting to ‘attract’. Attractiveness is a general theme across several departments of the municipality and with the majority of the interviewees. Generally they are interested in attracting people and businesses to the city, as one interviewee states, it is “something we very much focus on in Vejle, that is to be attractive, we focus basically on the more people we can get to live and invest here, put money into Vejle”<sup>129</sup> (Interview HS 2009). This is an account

which is familiar across the municipality, the idea it is a basic aim to ‘attract’ new people and businesses to the municipality. This is an inherently competitive ideal, as it involves the implicit rationality of attracting people and businesses from elsewhere to Vejle Municipality.

Attractiveness in this rather unspecified manner is also a focus of the Tourism Policy (Vejle Kommune 2006). It is stated as a general goal for tourism that there should be “continual product development to keep and increase attractiveness”<sup>130</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2006:6), as well as there should be a view of the “tourism effort as an effort to increase the area’s attractiveness for the visitor as well as the citizens”<sup>131</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2006:6). Attractiveness in terms of retail is underlined in the vision for retailing in Vejle, which is:

“We want to create a strong retail community by actively looking for and developing public-private partnerships between culture, tourism and retail.

We want to be the region’s most attractive retail area.”<sup>132</sup> (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2008:7)

Here it is an explicit goal to be the ‘most attractive’, which underlines the relational property of ‘attractiveness’, in terms of being more attractive than other places in the region. This is a familiar conceptualisation from the growing focus on comparison and local competitiveness in the previous story-line. Vejle Business Development also puts focus on a generally attractive business environment, which is somewhat related to the point of aesthetic attractiveness which I will discuss later. Here they have a priority to develop “attractive business and housing areas as a foundation to attract companies and citizens”<sup>133</sup> (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:3).

The overall idea of being ‘an attractive municipality’ is clearly important in Vejle Municipality, however in trying to understand this story-line, it is important to consider who they are going to attract. Attractiveness is a concept which implies a ‘target group’ although at times this may be easy to forget. At some of the points in the policies of Vejle Municipality ‘attractiveness’ is referred to without mention

of any particular target group, as in some of the examples discussed above, yet in other places there are actually quite specific references to who and what they would like to attract.

Within the Nature & Environment Department's 2009 policy, it is stated that Vejle Municipality should be "known because of its special natural and environmental qualities, that attract and hold onto active, innovative and creative people and businesses"<sup>134</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009c:4). This is again the general idea, that attractiveness is necessary to bring, and in this case also to keep, particular people and businesses. However here these people and businesses are not just anybody, but are "innovative and creative"<sup>135</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009c:4). The focus on 'creative' groups is particularly clear elsewhere. Vejle Business Development refers to this 'group' as "the ultimate resource for economic growth", and their presence apparently creates "great demand for culture and consumer opportunities and contributes to a series of positive effects in the local area - increased retailing, more restaurant visits and higher property prices"<sup>136</sup> (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2008:23).

The 'creative class', conceptualised most famously by Richard Florida (e.g. 2002), is a group which is clearly of importance to Vejle Municipality. This focus is perhaps most clear from the fact that Florida himself was invited to speak in the old Vejle Municipality in 2006, and according to one interviewee, the creative class is a conscious focus in the municipality (Interview LL 2009). The 'Spinning Mill Halls' (*Spinderihallerne*), a project which aims to bring together small businesses in creative fields, seems to be an institutionalisation of this focus on creativity. According to the leader of the Spinning Mill Halls, the focus on creativity and projects such as this means that "the business community will be able to attract some knowledge workers, who would not have chosen Vejle, because there was not an environment they could be a part of"<sup>137</sup> (Interview LL 2009). Also in connection with the Spinning Mill Halls, another civil servant states that "to be innovative, creative, that is also something we would like to be known for"<sup>138</sup> (Interview HT 2010). She carries on to say that to get these "innovative and creative people" to live in Vejle, "there has to also be culture, which they think is interesting"<sup>139</sup> (Interview HT 2010), highlighting the role of

her own department in attracting this group. As with the quote from Vejle Business Development, this group is being targeted from the conception that they are an economic resource.

Others view the target group of Vejle Municipality's attractiveness slightly more broadly, for example in terms of well-educated young people, rather than creative entrepreneurs exclusively. This group is of particular interest for the municipality as there is a limited availability of higher education in Vejle Municipality, so there is an awareness that many young people will leave the municipality to continue their education. A number of interviewees name this group as a target to attract to the municipality, mainly in terms of getting them to 'return' after they have finished their education. For two interviewees working with culture, this is where particularly youth culture can play a key role, through the rationality that giving children and young people a good experience in Vejle Municipality will draw them back later in their lives (Interview DAJ 2010; Interview HT 2010).

One interviewee already sees Vejle Municipality as being fairly attractive to these groups, at least in comparison with other parts of the region, stating that "it is actually easy to get young families, young well-educated graduates...it is actually easier to get them to work in Vejle, because many think that Vejle is a more attractive city than our neighbouring cities"<sup>140</sup> (Interview HS 2009). Vejle Business Development also work with this idea in their 2009 strategy, stating that it was a concern that the educational level in Vejle was relatively low compared to other urban regions in the country. Vejle Business Development, however, goes on to state that:

"The development in recent years has however corrected this condition - partly because businesses to a greater extent have attracted highly educated people, and partly because a focused effort has made Vejle Municipality especially a very attractive place for highly educated people to live and work."<sup>141</sup> (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:12).

Therefore young graduates, and their anticipated families, are another group which Vejle Municipality would like to be attractive for. This is by no means

mutually exclusive with the focus on 'creative' people and companies, as the status of being 'educated' is also being privileged here, in much the same way in which Florida focuses on young college graduates of various types in his work.

Fundamentally much of this story-line of being attractive to certain groups is based in a rationality of the importance of attractiveness, which could also be seen in the more recent municipal plans in chapter six. This is resonant with the 'creative class' thesis, in terms of attracting particular people who will in turn attract economic development through certain types of firms. One interviewee recognises this rationality, although conceptualises it as an empirically-based shift whereby companies move following labour. This leads onto the idea that municipalities have to compete on other parameters, which are beyond 'basic conditions', an idea which is also emphasised by others:

"We have reached the point [...], all municipalities have proper elderly care, proper childcare, proper schools. They are not a competitive parameter anymore. But culture can become that. There one can mark oneself out, because everything else, these are basic conditions, which municipalities have. And with culture one can more easily define oneself."<sup>142</sup> (Interview HT 2010)

It is apparent that Vejle Municipality is a municipality which focuses on 'attractiveness', both in a general sense, but also in terms of some quite particular target groups, those being creative, innovative, young, well-educated people. There seems to be a fair amount of consensus throughout the municipality in terms of the necessity of this attractiveness, and in terms of the people whom Vejle Municipality would want to attract. 'How' the municipality should be 'attractive' is more varied, related to aesthetics, as well as particular modes of development, such as those based on 'creativity' and 'experiences'.

An institutionalisation of attractiveness as a visual or aesthetic property of the municipality is common. With regard to the Technical Department, the city centre is particularly a focus. This is an emphasis which was also evident in the more recent municipal plans, as discussed in chapter six. Aesthetic attractiveness is based both on the general design of the city centre, and also on particular

projects. This aesthetic focus has an institutionalised history which stretches back further than the current Vejle Municipality, with the old Vejle Municipality producing an architectural policy in 1997 and an architectural prize being awarded annually in the municipality since the 1970s. The Technical Department as a whole has a variety of different tasks, including making local plans, handling applications for building permission, and maintenance and development of roads and parks in the municipality. However within the Technical Department there is a more specific 'Development Section', which focuses on more visionary and strategic development, particularly of Vejle city. The very existence of this section is telling, in that development of this sort is prioritised enough in the Technical Department to be institutionalised in this way.

The Technical Department wants an attractive city with "high quality public space and buildings" which "lives day and night all year round"<sup>143</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009e:2). In terms of the city centre, this should be "a large and charming urban centre with a pulsating life, filled with exciting experiences, modern urban functions, impressive architecture, water features, attractive housing, beautiful streets, diverse cultural and leisure opportunities and a dynamic commercial environment"<sup>144</sup> (Vejle Kommune 2009e:2). Some of these elements are quite explicitly to be designed, such as architecture, water and streets, whereas others are more general, such as the commercial environment and modern urban functions. However the statement of these different elements together leads to an obvious link being drawn between them, for example, an idea that a 'dynamic commercial environment' must also have 'impressive architecture' and 'beautiful streets'. Certain projects provide quite visible manifestations of the institutionalisation of attractiveness. The apartment block 'Bølgen' is perhaps the most noticeable for those outside of Vejle, a large wave-shaped building by the fjord (figure 7.1), visible from passing traffic on the motorway and railway line, and one interviewee describes this as a 'landmark' for Vejle because of its visibility from the motorway. Other projects recall the industrial aesthetic that the municipality takes as something of a focus, for example the Spinning Mill Halls project (figure 7.2), which is also a manifestation of the institutionalisation of the creative class focus.





Figure 7.1: 'The Wave' [*Bølgen*].



Figure 7.2: 'The Spinning Mill Halls' [*Spinderihallerne*].

The city centre of Vejle is a particular focus point for this visual attractiveness. Vejle Business Development is concerned with this, particularly with consideration to the retail sector. For example, one initiative they prioritise is “[r]enewal and beautification of the city centres as a frame for citizens, shops and visitors”<sup>145</sup> (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:3). Here all the settlements in the municipality are being referred to, however it is clear in other places in this strategy that Vejle City is the focus in terms of ‘beautification’. It is stated that Vejle City has developed to “a very attractive shopping and meeting place”<sup>146</sup> (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:11). This is directly related to particular projects within the city centre, as is stated in the following paragraph:

“The pedestrian streets, Bryggen [a shopping centre in the city], the opening of the canal and many other activities have attracted huge private investments and strongly increased turnover. Vejle’s central location and role as the region’s political/administrative centre have similarly increased activity and investment in hotel, restaurant and conference businesses.”<sup>147</sup> (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:11)

The connection between an aesthetically attractive city and success for retailing is also underlined in an introduction by the then-mayor, Leif Skov, to the “Retail in Vejle” booklet produced by Vejle Business Development. The mayor states that:

“Vejle is at the top of the Balance of Trade 2008 [Retail Institute Scandinavia]. We are proud of that, because it proves that Vejle is an attractive shopping city with a large hinterland. We have beautiful nature and a varied city with bridges, canals, cosy side streets and a good mix of shops. We have had a clear strategy to develop the city centre over a number of years. And that strategy has shown itself to be the completely right way to reach the goal - to be crowned Denmark’s best retail city.”<sup>148</sup> (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2008:5).

This is yet more evidence of the link which is being drawn between the city having an aesthetic attractiveness, and the success of businesses in the city, with the

focus particularly being on the city centre and the success of retail there. In terms of qualifying the need of the city to be attractive, the retail strategy also places a focus on 'the consumer of the future'. It is stated that for this consumer:

"The attractive power of the destination lies in a strong city centre with a broad choice of shops and a focus on shoppertainment. The consumer of the future will be a form of tourist, that understands shopping as an experience journey and purchases as souvenirs. The coming together of experiences and shopping therefore gives new opportunities for tourists, who are searching the unique in natural, urban, product and sensory experiences."<sup>149</sup> (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2008:17)

Here the work of the Technical Department in particular is being connected explicitly to increased turnover in retail and a generally increased level of investment in the city by Vejle Business Development. Vejle Business Development also puts focus on a generally attractive business environment.

Whereas Vejle City is very much in focus with the aforementioned departments, others, such as the Development Secretariat, are concerned with the wider municipality. Here aesthetic attractiveness comes into play again, for example the Nature & Environment Department is concerned with the attractiveness of the natural environment in Vejle Municipality, and the further consequences of this environment for wider development.

Another element of 'how' Vejle should be attractive is 'experiences', which was a clear part of one of the story-lines in chapter six. The 'experience economy' is hailed, in a similar manner to the focus on the creative class, as a key focus which the city should take to develop. This is in terms of retailing, and in a similar manner to the connection which is made between an aesthetically pleasing urban environment and retailing, 'experiences' are framed as essential to the development and success of the retail community. This goes in particular under the title of 'shoppertainment', an idea taken up by Vejle Business Development from a consultancy firm. It is stated that:

“Exciting events give life and dynamism in the city and attract customers, who would normally consume other places. Focus on development of the city centre gives big possibilities. The geographical spread is small and varied enough to stage experiences in a innumerable ways, and at the same time retailing enjoys the benefits of good visual contact between shops, art, culture and nature. By using urban space for experience zones with shoppertainment the retail strategy unfolds.”<sup>150</sup> (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2008:14).

Therefore here attractiveness of the city centre is again in focus, however with the addition of ‘experiences’ to create an attractive environment to encourage shoppers to come to Vejle City. ‘Experiences’ are institutionalised throughout the municipality in the focus on events, for example the aforementioned desire for events from a local to a national focus in the municipality.

Overall this story-line of a municipality focusing on attracting certain people and businesses, and creating projects through specific modes of development, is more diffuse than the previous story-lines I have analysed in this chapter. The institutionalisation of this story-line is, however, perhaps the most visible in the physical appearance of the city and the municipality and the types of projects which the municipality focuses on. It is also institutionalised through the focus within several of the municipality’s departments on development, for example through the organisation of ‘development sections’ in both the Technical and Culture & Citizens’ Services Departments, and also the Development Secretariat. Although these parts of the organisation do not have an explicit focus on particular modes of development, they are institutionalisations of the more broad development focus, which was one of the parts of this story-line I highlighted in the previous chapter.

	Story-Lines	Metaphors	Institutionalisation
<i>Vejle Municipality</i>	A visionary municipality	Being seen from the moon	Visions and strategies generally Branding and being known A culture of 'daring' and ambition Built environment projects.
	An extroverted municipality	Healthy competition	Study tours Ranking and benchmarking General comparisons and 'inspiration' - seeking
	Attractiveness	Lack of a clear metaphor	Built environment projects Focus on attracting specific types of people and businesses

Table 7.1: The story-lines of competitiveness in the contemporary municipality, their associated metaphors, and evidence of their institutionalisation.

## Conclusions

In this chapter I have analysed in greater depth the three story-lines which I traced in municipal planning in the previous chapter. These fundamentally competitiveness-based story-lines were found to be institutionalised across a number of the departments of the municipality today, through the focus on visions and strategies, branding, visible interventions in the urban environment and attention to the external ‘performance’ of the municipality. These are a variety of different manifestations of the institutionalisation of competitiveness, ranging from the organisational practices of the municipality, the production of policies by the municipality, and concrete projects in the urban environment of the municipality.

The analysis of the story-lines in this chapter also shows something of the character of competitiveness in Vejle Municipality. There is a focus on ‘ambition’ and ‘being the best’, which resonates with a similar understanding at the national level. Yet competitiveness is also mainly framed at a fairly local level, with it not even always being clear exactly what competitiveness means. Furthermore, the focus of development in competitive terms is very much based around being an ‘attractive’ municipality, particularly with certain groups of people and businesses in mind. Although these story-lines are institutionalised across the municipality, they are not entirely uncontested. This contestation seems to remain fairly strongly in nuances, for example in terms of differing opinions about the ‘being seen from the moon’ metaphor, rather than in the overall ideals of competitiveness.

The analysis in this chapter was based on answering the question of how competitiveness-oriented story-lines were framed and institutionalised across the contemporary organisation of Vejle Municipality. The findings are summarised in table 7.1. Through a focus on the three story-lines in municipal planning from the previous analytical chapter, I have shown the broader framings of these story-lines across the municipality. I have also shown the extent to which these story-lines of competitiveness are institutionalised across the municipality, through elements such as the focus on creating ‘visions’, branding exercises, the

organisation of the municipality, the types of projects which are in focus, and even the built environment.

The visionary story-line is linked to a metaphor of 'being seen from the moon'. This story-line is institutionalised through the general focus in selected departments on creating 'visions' and strategy documents regarding the future and how Vejle Municipality should develop. The focus in the municipality on branding activities specifically, and also generally on being known, is also an institutionalisation of this story-line in the organisational practices of the municipality. This is linked to a focus and a belief that civil servants should act in a 'daring' manner, and that there is a possibility to be quite ambitious in terms of projects and policies for the municipality. The final institutionalisation of the visionary story-line is manifested in projects in the built environment, through which Vejle seems to attempt to be very literally 'visible', as expressed through the 'seen from the moon' metaphor.

The extroverted story-line is linked to a metaphor of 'healthy competition'. This metaphor is particularly interesting in the way it naturalises competitiveness, and also legitimises it without the necessity to define one's competitors. This extroverted story-line is institutionalised through language in policies and plans, as general comparisons are made to other places. It is also institutionalised through more 'factual' comparisons, which are in particular manifested in benchmarking exercises and rankings. Finally this story-line is institutionalised through the use of study tours by political committees and civil servants, which again serve in providing 'inspiration' for the municipality, whilst not offering direct comparisons or framing direct competitors.

The attractiveness story-line is different to the previous two in that it lacks expression through a clear metaphor, and is generally a more diffuse story-line, encompassing the focus on different groups of people, businesses and on particular modes of development. This story-line is institutionalised particularly through concrete manifestations in the built environment, for example projects renewing industrial buildings and creating landmarks in Vejle city. This story-line

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is also institutionalised through the focus in plans and policies on particular groups and businesses.





## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Throughout the analysis, I have focused on the discourse of competitiveness and its institutionalisation in the small city (chapters six and seven), contextualising this with a study of story-lines and metaphors of competitiveness in national policy-making in Denmark (chapter five). Here I will review the findings from each of these analytical chapters, and follow this with a synthesis of these findings, considering more broadly what I can conclude from the empirical work. After a reflection on the potential generalisability of these findings, I will move into a more general and conceptual discussion of competitiveness and small cities. This discussion will take a point of departure in many of the points from the analytical chapters, but with reference back to the key theoretical perspectives from chapters two and three.

This thesis has been based around the institutionalisation and understandings of 'competitiveness' in Denmark, and specifically in a case study of a small city, Vejle Municipality. This is an important issue in Denmark in a time when the future development of the country, economically and spatially, is debated against the background of economic crisis, uneven development within the country, and the

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changing role of the welfare state. Whilst these issues are debated, they are seldom connected critically with the apparent pressure upon local government to act 'competitively'. Municipalities are the major providers of welfare services in Denmark, however they are increasingly working in a landscape of competitiveness, and expected to strategise, plan and act in a way which will increase their 'competitiveness'. Places are generally framed as potential 'winners' or 'losers' in this spatial competition. It is unsurprising that policy-making in small, just as in big, cities has begun to be oriented towards competitiveness. However, this is seldom recognised in policy or the media as part of the more general picture of uneven spatial development and changing roles, responsibilities and resources for public authorities, and competitiveness framings go generally unquestioned as the natural order of things.

I chose to approach this general problem through three specific questions, which then formed the foundation of the three analytical chapters in the thesis. These questions, related to my discursive research approach, specifically examined the story-lines and the institutionalisation of competitiveness, mainly at the level of the small city, but also taking into account framings and story-lines of competitiveness in the national context. Through examining these framings I aspired to interpret how 'competitiveness', an oft-repeated 'good', is understood in both national policy and in the small city. Viewing competitiveness as a neoliberal discourse, I chose to discuss how 'competitiveness' has come to hold this institutionalised position in municipal planning and throughout local government more generally. To recap, these three questions were as follows:

*How is competitiveness framed in Danish policy at the national level?*

*How has the competitiveness discourse been institutionalised historically in municipal planning in a small city?*

*How have competitiveness-oriented story-lines been framed and institutionalised across the contemporary organisation of local government in a small city?*

In this chapter I will first review the conclusions from the three analytical chapters, which correspond to these three research questions. I will then present a synthesis of the overall findings, in terms of how the findings for these three questions fit together to provide broader perspectives on the case. I will then discuss more broadly the problem behind this thesis, of spatial competitiveness and policy-making in small cities.

### **Story-Lines of Competitiveness in Danish National Policy**

The first research question was investigated in the analysis in chapter five. The landscape of competitiveness at a national level in Denmark is centred around two major story-lines of competitiveness. There is a general emphasis on ‘international competition’ as the context for various policies, but also as the goal of these policies. Competitiveness is a flexible discourse in this manner. This is very much consistent with a wider neoliberal political scene, focusing on competitiveness as a ‘threat’ and an ‘opportunity’ for Denmark, as well as promoting policies which relate broadly to the freedom of mobility of capital and labour, and the individual responsibility for welfare. These general framings also resonate with the international landscape of competitiveness, with its focus on hierarchies and benchmarks of national states and different sectors. These overall framings of competitiveness at the national level in Denmark reflect findings from the wider international and political context.

The two story-lines of competitiveness at the national level are not opposing, but are rather used to refer to competitiveness at different scales. The first of these story-lines is based on Denmark as a single competitive entity within an international landscape of competitiveness, and policies and measurements which aim to further and monitor Denmark’s ‘competitiveness’ in a large variety of public sectors. This story-line is reinforced by the metaphor of a ‘competitive race’, in which Denmark should strive to be amongst the winners. The second story-line is based on Denmark as a country with settlements that have different functions and which should develop differently. This story-line is accompanied by

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the metaphors of places as 'growth centres' and as having 'special identities', bringing the logic that particularly the larger settlements in the country, such as Copenhagen and the urban conurbation in Eastern Jutland, should develop especially and thus 'drive' development in the rest of the country. That all places should specialise in particular modes of economic development is related to the 'special identity' metaphor. This is fundamentally a story-line of internal competition, positioning some places over others, and which promotes uneven development as the way of promoting the 'overall' competitiveness of Denmark. As I have stated, these two story-lines are not opposites, and they can be conceived as related to one another, in that in many ways the 'uneven development' which is linked to 'internal competitiveness' is the darker side of the 'Denmark versus the world' story-line.

These national story-lines of competitiveness also show the institutionalisation of competitiveness at the national level, especially through the reports and policies which convey these story-lines. Competitiveness is institutionalised through these policies and ranking systems, as well as through planning initiatives which focus on particular areas of the country. Nationally the competitiveness story-lines are also fairly coherent in terms of the way they are measured and conceived.

## **Historical Institutionalisation of the Competitiveness Discourse in a Small City**

The second research question was investigated in the analysis in chapter six. This analysis focused on the process of institutionalising the discourse of competitiveness in municipal planning. In Vejle Municipality competitiveness has been institutionalised gradually over around the last 30 years in municipal planning. The changing story-lines in municipal planning have shown the shift towards a visionary, outward-oriented, and developmentally-specialised municipality. Generally these shifts can be placed in line with a movement from managerialism to entrepreneurialism in local government, and related to the contemporary framings of competitiveness in the Danish state, as discussed in the

previous section and chapter five. The three major story-lines in municipal planning have been institutionalised over the municipal plans from the last 30 years, with a shift in the manner which the municipality's agency is envisaged, the area of focus and points of reference of the municipality, and the substantive types of 'development' which are emphasised in the municipality. These story-lines each become institutionalised as oriented towards competitiveness, with the result that today Vejle Municipality is a visionary municipality which looks for inspiration and comparison elsewhere, and which is seeking to specialise on particular modes of development and types of businesses and people. This institutionalisation is apparent within the municipal plans, but also in the practices these plans relate to such as creating visions, benchmarking and ranking exercises, and projects in the city which relate to 'high quality' architecture and attracting particular business sectors and residents. At a more general level, this overview of the changing story-lines in municipal planning and the process of institutionalisation of competitiveness is related to the conclusion that competitiveness is not the 'natural' state of municipal planning, in that things have not always been this way. Although it may be the default way of thinking in municipal planning now, this is a position which has been gained over a relatively short period of time.

### **Competitiveness Story-Lines in a Small City Today**

This research question, analysed in chapter seven, focused on the understandings and institutionalisation of competitiveness-oriented story-lines in Vejle Municipality. Within chapter seven I analysed the three story-lines of a visionary municipality, an outward-looking municipality and the focus of development in the municipality in greater depth. These story-lines are institutionalised across different departments of the municipality today in a variety of different ways, such as a focus on creating visions and strategies, a desire to 'brand' the municipality, focus on the municipality's 'performance' in relation to other nearby

municipalities, visible projects in the built environment of the city, and a focus on taking study tours to other places for policy inspiration.

The understandings of competitiveness in the small city show the local focus of competitiveness, with the surrounding municipalities and settlements of similar sizes being those which receive the most attention. Although bigger places are mentioned, these are either casual references in terms of a wider story-line of international competition, such as that which was evident at the national level, or they are brought in focus as places for policy inspiration instead of as direct competitors.

Furthermore competitiveness in Vejle Municipality seems to be linked strongly to a focus of development on 'attractiveness', and the attraction of particularly young, innovative and creative people to the municipality, along with innovative and creative companies within specified growth branches. This attractiveness focus is also linked to specific modes of development which receive focus, such as the 'creative class' and also a focus on 'experiences' as a way to economic development.

A number of metaphors are also used which emphasise and simplify these story-lines. One of these is the metaphor of 'Vejle should be seen from the moon', which focuses efforts on the desire for the municipality to be 'seen' nationally and internationally through their policies and projects. The second metaphor is that of 'healthy competition', which legitimates the need for competition and also links it with the municipality's performance, without the need to focus explicitly on who the municipality's 'competitors' might be.

Overall the case study of Vejle Municipality has shown the focus of competitiveness in the municipality through a number of story-lines. These story-lines are also shown to be strongly institutionalised throughout the municipality, with a number of the organisational practices, policies and actions in the wider municipality linked to these story-lines. In Vejle Municipality competitiveness is a more diffuse and flexible discourse, which can be interpreted through these story-lines, but which is not conceptualised coherently in the same way it was at the national level. Policy actors in Vejle Municipality are working within the

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institutionalisation of this discourse, but its flexibility still allows them a fair amount of space for interpretation in how they understand the discourse and relate it to their own area of work.

### **Competitiveness, Denmark and Vejle Municipality - bringing together the empirical findings**

Through the empirical study and the analysis in chapters five to seven I have produced an overview of the story-lines of competitiveness and their institutionalisation at the national level, as well as a more in-depth study of the process and status of institutionalising competitiveness in local government. I have been fundamentally concerned with spatial competitiveness, although shifting metaphors of competitiveness mean that this is related to other conceptualisations of competitiveness such as the economic. Altogether my findings demonstrate the strong institutionalisation of competitiveness in Denmark, in national policy and in the case of local government in a small city, Vejle Municipality. I have interpreted competitiveness as a discourse through a variety of story-lines, and its institutionalisation is seen in a variety of policy practices and actions.

In table 8.1 I have brought together the findings from the three research questions. Table 8.1 shows the two national story-lines of competitiveness and the three story-lines of competitiveness in Vejle Municipality, the associated metaphors and the evidence of the institutionalisation of these story-lines. The institutionalisation of competitiveness in national policy and in local government in Vejle Municipality is strong. At both scales there are competitiveness-oriented story-lines and associated metaphors which simplify the understanding of spatial competitiveness, and make connections to the policy actions and practices which are the manifestations of the institutionalisation of the discourse. In Vejle Municipality I have shown that this institutionalisation has been a process in municipal planning, with competitiveness-oriented story-lines emerging over the last 30 years. This investigation of the process has shown that competitiveness is



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	Story-Lines	Metaphors	Institutionalisation
<i>National Level</i>	A Leading Denmark	A competitive race	Governmental strategies promoting competitiveness; annual competitiveness reports
	Internal Competition	Places as motors; places having special identities	National spatial policies; particular places selected as meriting special planning initiatives.
<i>Vejle Municipality</i>	A visionary municipality	Being seen from the moon	Visions and strategies generally; branding and being known; a culture of 'daring' and ambition; manifestation in the built environment.
	An outward-looking municipality	Healthy competition	Study tours; ranking and benchmarking; general comparisons and 'inspiration' -seeking.
	Attractiveness	Lack of clear metaphors	Manifestation in the built environment; focus on attracting specific types of people and businesses; focus on particular modes of development.

Table 8.1: Collected empirical findings.

not ‘natural’ or the way that local government has always been oriented. The interpretation of the story-lines of competitiveness across the municipality today has then shown both the strength of the institutionalisation and the degree to which competitiveness is unquestioned in this small city today. These findings regarding Vejle Municipality can then be viewed in the wider Danish context, in terms of the empirical findings which show the competitiveness story-lines at the national level, both in terms of an outward competitiveness orientation and also a belief in the need for spatial differentiation within Denmark.

There are several points which stand out from the findings in table 8.1 in terms of both the case study of Vejle Municipality and the investigation of spatial competitiveness in national policy. At both the national level and in Vejle Municipality there is a strong comparative element to being competitive. This is most obvious in terms of explicit rankings and benchmarking, for example as in the *Competitiveness Reports* at the national level or the *Growth Barometer* in Vejle. These types of comparisons are strongly coherent in terms of how they are defined and in terms of who the competitors are, for example comparing Denmark with other OECD countries and Vejle Municipality with neighbouring municipalities. Yet comparisons are a part of competitiveness in more ways than this. Within Vejle Municipality, comparisons are often undefined, in terms of a seemingly simple idea to be ‘the best’. The idea that competition is a concept which involves ‘competitors’ is not always clear for interviewees in Vejle Municipality, and competitors are not always necessary for the legitimisation of being ‘the best’, or in the metaphor of competitiveness as something ‘healthy’. Comparisons are also apparent in terms of ‘inspiration’ rather than explicit competition, with Vejle Municipality often looking to bigger cities for the purposes of such inspiration, whilst acknowledging that they are not the same type of city as these places. Finally being competitive is also not enough in itself, in that there is an attention-seeking aspect, in that both Denmark and Vejle would like to be ‘known’ for the sectors in which they are particularly competitive, and even be seen as a ‘model’ in certain areas.

Another point which is notable across the story-lines and institutionalisations in table 8.1 is the focus on specialisation. The story-line of internal competition at

the national level, through the metaphors of places as motors and places as having special identities, highlights a need for certain places to 'create' growth, as well as places specialising economically. Within Vejle Municipality, the story-line of attractiveness in particular emphasises specific people and specific businesses as particularly desirable for the municipality, alongside specific modes of development. This focus on specialising on certain people and certain business sectors is both speculative, in its relation to particular understandings of what will create economic growth in the future, and is also exclusive, in terms of those people and sectors which are not seen as important in this conception of the future. This point is related to the general concerns of much of the critical literature on neoliberalism, which I presented in chapter two.

I have shown empirically that competitiveness-oriented story-lines are institutionalised in some areas of national policy in Denmark and also in a single municipality based around a small city. I have also highlighted several issues here which reoccur in several of the empirical findings. Before I can move further with this, it is necessary to consider whether these empirical findings can be used to make broader conclusions. It is important to consider how this is possible methodologically by reflecting one final time on the research approach, and what this approach has given me the potential to say more widely.

## **Revisiting the Research Approach**

In order to use the empirical findings as a basis for reflections beyond the case study, it is necessary to consider the extent to which greater generalisations are possible, which brings me back to reflecting on my research approach. There are two major concerns with regard to this research approach and wider discussions from these findings. The first concern is related to the discourse approach and its potential limitations. The second concern is related to the use of a single case study and in particular the issue of generalisability which this raises.

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The research approach has contributed to certain focuses within my work, but it has also meant that other elements have taken a back seat. The focus on discourses has limited me somewhat in terms of the conclusions I can reach about actors and actor dynamics. This is related to a reification of discourse, which at times risks giving 'competitiveness' a life of its own. The analysis of competitiveness as a discourse has allowed me both to show the privileged position competitiveness holds in national policy-making and local government, and also to demonstrate how it has reached this position over time in the specific case of municipal planning in Vejle Municipality. This has led to a view of competitiveness and its institutionalisation somewhat independently of the actors who are involved in producing and reproducing the discourse. Whereas many actors in the municipality were fairly sure about the person-dependent nature of the ambitious plans in Vejle Municipality, this is a thread of the narrative which the discourse approach has somewhat overshadowed. Awareness of this issue plays a significant role in overcoming it, in that in the analyses and these conclusions I have attempted not to view discourse entirely in a vacuum. Whilst discourse has taken centre stage in this thesis, I have been aware that this does not mean it is the only way of interpreting these processes in local government, and that other aspects play a role.

A potential problem linked to this reification can be confirmation of what is expected. I began this thesis with the belief that competitiveness was reified in spatial planning and policy-making, and at the most basic level that is what I have found. The interpretation which this approach requires, which I also discussed in terms of positionality in chapter four, means that there is significant leeway for contesting interpretations. The use of a discourse approach with a broader focus than language also means that I am looking beyond the linguistic constructions, and also at practices and actions related to the discourse of competitiveness, such as those practices which I used to exemplify the institutionalisation of competitiveness at the national and local levels. This is a trap which I have again attempted to avoid, both through a wider understanding of discourse linked to practices and actions, and also through the same process of awareness which I discussed in the previous paragraph.

The second concern which I would like to reflect on here is related to my focus on a single case study, Vejle Municipality, as the majority of the empirical evidence in this thesis. Following his Aalborg study, Flyvbjerg (2001) takes up a strong defence of the single case study, stating that it is possible to make generalisations from such a study, if not formal, statistical generalisation. Whereas this seems to be a valid point, it is also interesting to look at what Flyvbjerg (1998) actually does in his own single case study. Although he makes more general theoretical points from this study, he does not contextualise his study, focusing on theoretical generalisations rather than widening the context. This would seem to imply that for Flyvbjerg, although “context matters” (2001), contextualisation in terms of looking at one’s findings more broadly does not. In this thesis, I have attempted to combat this through the general focus on the competitiveness landscape in Denmark, as well as by bringing contextualisation into these conclusions.

I stated in chapter four that the selection of the case study of Vejle Municipality was an information-based choice, and from the start I viewed it as a potentially extreme case. That is now a point which I would like to reconsider. Although the extent of the competitiveness discourse and its institutionalisation in Vejle Municipality may be extreme for a small city, manifestations of the competitiveness discourse that I observed in Vejle Municipality are familiar in other places. It would be incorrect to state that every municipality based on a small city in Denmark is doing the same as Vejle Municipality, yet it is possible to set what is happening in Vejle Municipality in the wider Danish context. This is related to the issue of contextualisation, considering the case of Vejle Municipality in a broader picture, rather than attempting to draw generalised conclusions from the case.

Taking these reflections into account, it is possible to move on to a discussion of the theoretical concepts which I introduced in chapters two and three, and it is also possible to take a more contextualised discussion of my specific empirical findings. This is not a generalisation in terms of statements about ‘all small cities’ or ‘all municipalities in Denmark’, but it offers a wider view of my findings which illustrates their potential broader significance, whilst acknowledging the potential for variations between countries and small cities.

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### **Contextualising the Findings**

Within Denmark, and in other countries, many small cities are engaged in practices such as branding, similar projects aimed at attracting ‘creative’ or ‘innovative’ people and businesses, building noticeable ‘landmark’ buildings, and many of the other aspects of institutionalisation of competitiveness which I have illustrated through the analytical chapters here.

The policy-oriented literature from Denmark plays a useful role in this contextualisation, providing various studies of cities which have engaged in branding practices, flagship projects and other aspects which are similar to those institutionalised in Vejle. Jensen (2007) discusses branding practices in Aalborg Municipality, particularly with reference to a number of projects such as a music hall and a cultural centre. Sørensen *et al* (2010) discuss the use of the creative class and experience economy theses in a number of small Danish cities. Therkildsen *et al* (2009) refer to the case of Frederikshavn and their attempts at harnessing the economic gains of the ‘experience economy’. These cases and more all suggest that Vejle Municipality is not the only small city in Denmark engaged in such a competitiveness agenda.

With regard to the national policy level in Denmark, the international competitiveness discussion in the beginning of chapter five already showed that competitiveness is not a Danish discourse exclusively. Other countries focus on competitiveness through policy statements and measurements, and international organisations form part of a competitiveness industry. In this way, the similarities of competitiveness in Denmark and Vejle Municipality to what is happening elsewhere is quite clear. I also discussed in chapter three the concept of ‘varieties’ of neoliberalism, implying that competitiveness may exist in a particular Danish or small city ‘variety’, which places greater emphasis on any peculiarities which may exist. Furthermore the small cities literature proposed studies of the small city as a different kind of urban entity to the big city. The examples I have mentioned so far have contextualised my findings from Vejle

Municipality somewhat, yet it remains to be discussed whether Denmark and Vejle Municipality show particular types of competitiveness, or just the same variety as has been observed elsewhere.

### **Revisiting the Small Cities and Competitiveness Concepts**

A number of authors I discussed in chapter two (e.g. Peck & Tickell 2002; Lerner 2003; Peck 2004; Bristow 2010) called for a more varied and contextual study of the differences in neoliberalism and competitiveness, which is partly what I have responded to in this thesis by investigating a widespread neoliberal discourse in a lesser-studied context. Responding to this call is one thing, but it is equally, if not more important, to consider what can be learnt about competitiveness and the small city from this study. In the case study small city competitiveness was not the same as competitiveness at other scales, such as in Danish national policy or the international competitiveness discourse. Although there were some common threads, such as the comparative elements which I discussed above, competitiveness was very much viewed at a local level, perhaps in terms of what Bell & Jayne (2006) would call 'parochialism'. Small city actors in this case did not feel limited by this understanding of competitiveness, rather it provided much more concrete comparisons than looking further afield, with comparison to elsewhere restricted to the idea of 'inspiration' rather than competition. Whereas some have been concerned about context being cast aside in the race to be competitive, this finding seems to indicate that some small city actors are in fact very aware of context, and are not interested in simply applying policy ideas from elsewhere in an unchanged form. Furthermore the flexibility of the competitiveness discourse, which has also been apparent throughout the case study, means that it is quite easily adjusted to the policy-making and planning of a small city.

The ordinary cities perspective called for a look beyond 'paradigmatic' cities and beyond narrow economic perspectives. Robinson (2006) was also interested in increasing the range of cities researched in urban studies, rather than assuming

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that all cities should strive for an evolution towards those at the 'top' of a particular hierarchy. As with the wider study of neoliberalism and competitiveness, this thesis also provides an empirical study of another 'type' of city which is often ignored in urban studies. The critical perspective on the small city is also one which is missing in urban studies and planning literature, and is another contribution of this thesis. The case study of Vejle Municipality has shown a small city trying to be something more, thinking in a way which is beyond mere 'survival', which is how the small city is often framed in the policy-oriented literature. One of the major starting points in investigating the small city was the proposition that the small city was somehow qualitatively different to the 'big city' (e.g. Bell & Jayne 2006). This is a puzzle which I am still wrestling with, and in light of the reflections above, it is impossible for me to make any absolute generalisations here. Yet it is apparent that a typically 'big city' discourse, competitiveness, also impacts small city policy making and policy actors, and that it can also be created within the small city. Size is not a barrier to entering discourses of competitiveness, especially as the competitiveness is often framed as occurring on a different level to the 'global competition' which is the most obvious discourse at the national and international levels.

I stated from the start that I have taken a critical stance in this thesis, and also that one of my intended contributions was a critical perspective on the small city. My critical perspective has been based on an empirical study and the case study of a Danish small city. The disadvantage of such a perspective is that there is not an obvious domain for dialogue when discussing critically practices of competitiveness in the small city. As I have shown with the contextualisation of my findings and the analysis of some national policies in Denmark, small city actors are not isolated in how they behave. The wider landscape of competitiveness, which is both national and international, means that it is difficult to imagine how actors in the small city themselves can implement change. Shifts in the discourses of planning and spatial development are inevitable and possible over a relatively short period of time, as my historical analysis of the shift towards competitiveness has shown. Therefore from this perspective, 'suggesting'



new discourses is not so significant as creating critique and opening up awareness of current discourses, thus opening up potential for change.

In the end of her study of regional competitiveness, Bristow (2010) suggests 'resilience' as an alternative discourse around which to organise regional spatial policy. For her, this offers a wider understanding of regional development and greater policy options. Whilst I am certain that a new discourse will emerge at some point around which municipal planning and policy-making in Denmark is organised, I am loathe to suggest or predict what that might be. The critical perspective with which I have approached this study leads me to hope that any new discourse will be more broadly focused, but I can also see that the creation, contextualisation and adaptation of a discourse within a particular city is perhaps not the be-all-and-end-all. Other factors, such as the politics and policy discussions of the moment, the economic situation of the municipality and the wider world, and perhaps above all the particular actors who are forming policies and acting within the local context, are just as important.

The major problem which I started out investigating was whether local government in small cities was being placed in a situation of being 'compelled to compete'. Much of the critical literature on neoliberalism and competitiveness, as well as the small and ordinary cities literature, seemed to suggest this was the case. Through the analysis in this thesis I have shed light on the complexity of the competitiveness discourse in Denmark and the case study of the local government in a small city there. Although the small city in a national context of competitiveness seems to reflect many findings from elsewhere about the nature of the competitiveness discourse, it also seems that the small city is creating a particular variety of local competitiveness. This is not something they are directly compelled to do, but it is a more diffuse, and perhaps more surreptitious process. Local government actors in the small city seem to be complicit in creating the compulsion to compete, and this is occurring in a rather unreflective manner. Greater debate on whether this is the direction which local government should take, particularly in the small city, is necessary.

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BN: Nielsen, Bue - Geographer, Ministry of the Environment. Interviewed 23/04/2010.

NØ: Østergaard, Niels - Former Head of Planning Office, Ministry of the Environment. Interviewed 07/05/2010.

#### *Vejle Municipality*

HS: Henrik Stjernholm - Head of Development Section, Technical Department. Interviewed 25/11/2009.

PH: Peder Hummelose - Chairman of the Technical Committee. Interviewed 28/06/2010.

HT: Helle Thorsen - Head of Development, Culture & Citizens' Services Department. Interviewed 26/05/2010.

DAJ: Dan Arnløv Jørgensen - Chairman of the Culture Committee. Interviewed 24/06/2010.

LL: Lene Lawaetz - Leader of the Spinning Mill Halls project. Interviewed 14/12/2009.

LB: Louise Bjerre - Consultant, Vejle Business Development. Interviewed 16/12/2009.

DB: Dorthe Bjerre - City Brand Manager, Vejle Business Development. Interviewed 10/06/2010.

MP: Michael Pedersen - Leader, 'City Vejle' (chamber of commerce). Interviewed 10/06/2010.

MDN: Morten D. Nielsen - Tourism Leader, Vejle Business Development . Interviewed 13/08/2010.

CT: Carsten Tromborg - Head of Development Secretariat. Interviewed 26/05/2010.

COMPELLED TO COMPETE?

PR & KE: Peter Ruhlmann & Klaus Enevoldsen - Consultant & Leader, Nature & Environment Department. Interviewed 10/06/2010.

SH: Sonja Hansen - Head of Communication Department. Interviewed 12/08/2010.



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## APPENDIX

### DANISH QUOTATIONS

1. “Hvad er det da, der skal sikre Danmarks fremtidige konkurrenceevne? Vi skal, ligesom mange andre vestlige lande, der må finde nye ståsteder i den globale konkurrence, til stadighed skabe *ny* viden: Med andre ord, vi skal *innovere*. Innovation er den løbende skabelse af ny baggrundsviden og nye principper, men innovation er også skabelsen af nye, konkrete, salgbare produkter. Og med innovation er det, *kreativitet* kommer ind i billedet.” (Andersen *et al* 2009:16, original emphasis).

2. “...uden nødvendigvis at have et bestemt fokus eller en bestemt profil” (Andersen *et al* 2009:87)

3. “små, hyppige oplevelser” ... “der skaber de nødvendige kreative masser for specialiserede service- og kulturtilbud såsom helsekostbutikker, sushirestauranter og eksperimentalteatre” (Andersen *et al* 2009:87)

#### DANISH QUOTATIONS

4. "...blandt verdens mest velstående lande" ... "et velfærdssamfund under pres, hvor der er behov for fornyelse og forbedring på en række områder" (Regeringen 2002:8)

5. "...om ti år ikke nødvendigvis ligger I top, hvis ikke vi gør noget" (Regeringen 2002:8)

6. "Globalisering betyder en åbning af verden, som vi har ønsket os, og som giver Danmark store muligheder." (Regeringen 2005b:5)

7. "...risikerer, at vi i den skærpede konkurrence ikke vil kunne fastholde vores position blandt de rigeste lande i verden, fordi andre lande vil overhale os." (Regeringen 2005b:5)

8. "Danmark som førende vidensamfund: Vi sætter det mål, at det offentlige og de private virksomheder tilsammen øger indsatsen inden for forskning og udvikling, så Danmark i 2010 når op på et beløb over 3 pct. af bruttonationalproduktet, heraf 1 pct. offentlig forskning.

Danmark som førende iværksættersamfund: Vi sætter det mål, at Danmark i 2015 er blandt de samfund I verden, hvor der nystrates flest vækstvirksomheder.

Uddannelser I verdensklasse: Vi sætter det mål, at eleverne i folkeskolen bliver blandt verdens bedste til læsning, matematik og naturfag. At alle unge gennemfører en ungdomsuddannelse - og mindst 85 pct. i 2010 og 95 pct. i 2015. Og at mindst 45 pct. gennemfører en videregående uddannelse I 2010 og 50 pct. i 2015.

Et innovativt samfund: Vi sætter det mål, at Danmark er verdens mest konkurrencedygtige samfund I 2015." (Regeringen 2005b:17)

9. “ambitiøse mål” (Regeringen 2010:11)

10. “Regeringens mål for Danmark 2020

- (i) Danmark skal være blandt de 10 rigeste land i verden
- (ii) Det danske arbejdsudbud skal være blandt de 10 højeste i verden
- (iii) Danske skolebørn skal være blandt de dygtigste i verden
- (iv) Mindst ét dansk universitet skal ligge i Europas top 10
- (v) Danmark skal være blandt de 10 lande i verden, hvor man lever længst
- (vi) Danmark skal være et grønt bæredygtigt samfund og blandt verdens tre mest energieffektive lande
- (vii) Danmark skal være blandt de bedste til at skabe lige muligheder
- (viii) Danmark skal være blandt de mest frie lande og blandt de bedste i Europa til integration
- (ix) Danskerne skal være et af verdens mest tillidsfulde og trygge folk
- (x) Den offentlige sektor skal være blandt de mest effektive og mindst bureaukratiske i verden” (Regeringen 2010:11)

11. “...overhale os.” (Regeringen 2005b:5)

12. “...hvordan den regering ser på landets geografiske fremtid” (Interview BN 2010)

13. “polycentrisk bysystem” (Mijø- og Energiministeriet 1997:13)

#### DANISH QUOTATIONS

14. “særkenderne” ... “at realisere det potentiale” (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000:5)

15. “...det var led i en tankegang om nu skulle den enkelte by satse på det de var stærke i, der hvor de stod godt i konkurrencen”... “det var også i samarbejde med Økonomi- og Erhvervsministeriets tanker om konkurrenceklynger og erhvervsklyger, som jo hang meget godt sammen med vores måde at anskue det på...” (Interview BN 2010)

16. “brancher eller klynger” ... “har opbygget unikke kompetencer og avanceret viden” (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000:6)

17. “...byens og stedets identitetsbærende karakter og kulturelle kapital, der får betydning for planlægning” (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000:8)

18. “...skal også gøre stedet og byen æstetisk bedre, og den skal medvirke til at områdets arealanvendelse, indretning og arkitektur udtrykker den mangfoldighed, som præger Danmark” (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000:8)

19. “I det hidtidige bymønster er alle byer tildelt en rolle i udviklingen af landet.” (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 2000:14)

20. “...lang tradition for at tage os af de mest sårbare i vores samfund og investere i mennesker og fremtiden” (Indenrigs- og Sundhedsministeriet 2004:5)

21. "...landsplanlægning skulle være overordnet og danne ramme for en regionplanlægning, der er overordnet og danner ramme for kommuneplanlægning, som så er grundlaget for lokalplanernes udarbejdelse" (Gaardmand 1993:190)

22. "...al planlægning har et stort indhold af politiske prioriteringer, og at den derfor bør underlægges den politiske verdens vilkår" (Gaardmand 1993:192)

23. "...at se arealanvendelsen i en større sammenhæng og for at koordinere planlægningen af den fremtidige arealanvendelse" (Miljøministeriet 1991:84)

24. "...kommuneplanloven er en *rammelov*, der aldrig har haft til hensigt at få kommunerne til at handle ens, tværtom." (Miljøministeriet 1991:74, original emphasis)

25. "...lagde stor vægt på den traditionelle arealplanlægning" (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 1999:22)

26. "...var optaget af at få de begrænsede ressourcer til at hænge sammen med kravene til den kommunale service, og der var meget hård kamp mellem kommunerne om at få del i den begrænsede vækst" (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 1999:22)

27. "mange muligheder for at opfylde kommunernes forskelligeartede behov" (Miljø- og Energiministeriet 1999:23)

#### DANISH QUOTATIONS

28. "Behovet for en direkte tilknytning til arealplanlægningen - herunder den sagsorienterede lokalplanlægning og byggesagsbehandling - er ikke længere til stede. Den *fysiske* kommuneplan *har* man i kommunerne. Den fik man i begyndelsen eller midten af 80'erne. Nu drejer det sig om at realisere den *udviklingsorienterede* kommuneplan." (Miljøministeriet 1991:75, original emphasis)

29. "...noget mere begrænsede" (Vejle Kommune 1982:6)

30. "...planlægning af de næste 8-12 års ikke snævert lader sig begrænse til noget arealmæssigt" (Vejle Kommune 1986:19)

31. "...har byrådet kun en begrænset indflydelse på" ... "...først og fremmest af konjunkturerne i samfundet" (Vejle Kommune 1982:10)

32. "...som den økonomiske udvikling, lovgivning og internationale forhold, som kommunen ikke har mulighed for at styre" (Vejle Kommune 1994a:4)

33. "...giver den geografiske beliggenhed Vejle helt ekstraordinære muligheder, som bør udnyttes" (Vejle Kommune 1989:16)

34. "...At vælge og satse på de brancheområder, som giver gode arbejdspladser" (Vejle Kommune 1989:16)

35. "...visuel forskønnelse" ... "trivsel og vækst" (Vejle Kommune 1996:27)

36. "...et dynamisk erhvervsmiljø" (Vejle Kommune 1996:28)
37. "Vejle er et godt sted at bo og leve, men Byrådet har den vision, at det kan blive endnu bedre. Vejle skal være et sundt og miljørigtigt samfund, hvor borgerne har de bedste muligheder for trivsel og sundhed." (Vejle Kommune 2001:4)
38. "Viden, Vækst og Velfærd" (Vejle Kommune 2009:9)
39. "...den konkrete arealplanlægning" (Vejle Kommune 2009:9)
40. "...kun kan nås, hvis borgere, foreninger, erhverv, brugere og kommune arbejde sammen ud fra fælles visioner" (Vejle Kommune 2009:13)
41. "...har udviklingen i vort samfund medført, at behovet for bl.a. institutioner samt kultur- og idrætsfaciliteter er større end nogensinde før" (Vejle Kommune 1982:14)
42. "...hvor og hvornår det finder sted" (Vejle Kommune 1986:20)
43. "...at tænke nyht, både på tværs af grænsen mellem privat og offentlige service og på tværs af traditionelle sektorgrænser" (Vejle Kommune 1986:20)



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44. "Selvom problemet er samfundsskabt, kan vi i Vejle måske stimulere flere lokale initiativer og anviser utraditionelle løsninger for at skabe nye arbejdspladser og derved få flere folk i arbejde." (Vejle Kommune 1982:6)

45. "...afhængige af, om private virksomheder ønsker at investere, og det er igen afhængigt af den økonomiske og politiske situation i samfundet" (Vejle Kommune 1982:6)

46. "...et grundlag, som kan trække virksomheder til byen" (Vejle Kommune 1982:10)

47. "...de bedst mulige vilkår for det lokale erhvervsliv, således at dette kan gennemføre en fornyelse og opretholde den fornødne dynamik" (Vejle Kommune 1986:29)

48. "Vejle Kommune er lille i areal, men centralt placeret i det store spil." (Vejle Kommune 1989:4)

49. "I løbet af de næste 10 år vil der fra Vejle kun være ca. 2 timer med tog til København, Frederikshavn og Hamburg" (Vejle Kommune 1989:4)

50. "...et godt udgangspunkt for at markere sig internationalt" (Vejle Kommune 1994b:9)

51. "...et nationalt og internationalt mødested for erhvervsliv, forskning, udvikling og uddannelse" (Vejle Kommune 1994b:10)

52. "En aktiv kommune i regionen" (Vejle Kommune 1996:40)
53. "...tiltrække, påvirke og udvikle erhvervslivet i kommunen og i hele trekantområdet" (Vejle Kommune 1996:40)
54. "en fremtrædende handels- og serviceby" (Vejle Kommune 1999:3)
55. "...det sted man helst vil bo" (Vejle Kommune 2001:7)
56. "kulturelt kraftcenter" (Vejle Kommune 2001:11)
57. "Vejle som frontløber" (Vejle Kommune 2001:5)
58. "Vores erfaringer og viden skal udbredes til gavn for andre." (Vejle Kommune 2001:5)
59. "...et nationalt skoleeksempel på, hvordan vækst og udvikling kan foregå økologisk, natur- og miljømæssigt forsvarligt" (Vejle Kommune 2001:7)
60. "...har Vejle traditionelt været den mest attraktive handelsby" (Vejle Kommune 1999:27)
61. "...en spændende handelsby" (Vejle Kommune 1999:28)

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62. "...som trekantområdet mest dynamiske handelscenter" (Vejle Kommune 2001:9)

63. "...erhvervsstruktur, uddannelsesmuligheder, infrastruktur, servicetilbud, oplevelser og faciliteter på niveau med landets storbyer" (Vejle Kommune 2001:28)

64. "...styrke den naturlige opland for handel, arbejdskraft, uddannelse og kultur" (Vejle Kommune 2001:28)

65. "at markere sig i internationale sammenhænge gennem bl.a. Venskabsbysamarbejder, EU-projekter, international erhvervsmæssig markedsføring, sports- og kulturarrangementer" (Vejle Kommune 2001:29)

66. "...fastlåsning af de eksisterende udgiftsniveauer vil give anledning til favorisering af børn og unge på bekostning af mulighederne for at opretholde serviceniveauet over for de ældre" (Vejle Kommune 1986:19)

67. "...mere eller mindre selvstændigt fungerende servicemæssig og kulturel enhed" (Vejle Kommune 1986:7)

68. "...fordi vi stiller stadig større krav til indhold og oplevelser" (Vejle Kommune 1989:5)

69. "...oplevelser, afveksling og mange muligheder for udfoldelse" (Vejle Kommune 1989:12)

70. "...pulserende og oplevelsesrigt" (Vejle Kommune 1996:21)
71. "...levende og spændende" (Vejle Kommune 1996:23)
72. "...som gøre byen sjovere" (Vejle Kommune 1996:24)
73. "...en høj livskvalitet for Vejles borgere" (Vejle Kommune 1996:36)
74. "...noget, der skal kunne ses, høres og fornemmes" (Vejle Kommune 1996:36)
75. "...det bindemiddel" ... "at skabe en levende og interessant sammenhæng mellem byens og borgernes liv" (Vejle Kommune 1996:36)
76. "...et velfærdsgode, på linie med øvrige offentlige serviceydelser" (Vejle Kommune 1996:36)
77. "...over et landsgennemsnitligt kulturniveau" (Vejle Kommune 1996:39)
78. "kulturelle lokomotiv" (Vejle Kommune 1996:37)
79. "Vejle skal være en by med et mangfoldigt og levende idræts- og kulturliv, hvor vi kan opleve sportens, kunstens og kulturens indflydelse på byen og dens liv." (Vejle Kommune 2001:14)

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80. "...skabe mere liv og oplevelser døgnet og året rundt, gennem tæt bymæssig bebyggelse og anlæg af høj arkitektonisk kvalitet" (Vejle Kommune 2001:9)

81. "handelsmiljøet" ... "positive oplevelser" (Vejle Kommune 2001:9)

82. "...færdes på gågaderne, ad sidegaderne og går gennem smøger, overdækkede passager og pladser" (Vejle Kommune 2001:9)

83. "Vi binder attraktioner, natur, miljø og kultur sammen i nye oplevelser" (Vejle Kommune 2009:9)

84. "...oplevelsesøkonomiens vækstpotentiale" (Vejle Kommune 2009:13)

85. "...fremme inspirerende og nytænkende oplevelser" (Vejle Kommune 2009:11)

86. "Kommunen rummer også store oplevelsesværdier, hvis potentiale ikke er fuldt udnyttet i dag. Det gælder blandt andet Jelling monumenterne, samt hele ådalen, der både giver mulighed for aktiv ferie og kulturturisme. Men også havnen, Vejle By og kysten har udviklingspotentialer." (Vejle Kommune 2009:12)

87. "...vil udnytte sine attraktioner ved også at gøre byen til en oplevelse for borgere og besøgende, med spændende torv, butikker og opholdssteder." (Vejle Kommune 2009:12)

88. "...skal gøres til en aktiv del af bymidten med muligheder for mange typer af oplevelser" (Vejle Kommune 2009:11)

89. "Handelsgaderne og butikkerne skal gøres smukkere og udvikle deres særlige karakter og stemning, så handelscentrene fremtræder med en stærk profil, hvor butikkerne, gågaderne, pladser og torve, cafeer og restauranter understøtter hinanden og giver den blanding af oplevelser, som besøgende forventer." (Vejle Kommune 2009:12)

90. "Alle borgere i kommunen skal have mulighed for at opleve naturen og færdes i naturen." (Vejle Kommune 2009:15)

91. "...bidrager i det daglige til, at mennesker får en forøget livskvalitet" (Vejle Kommune 2009:15)

92. "...markedsføres som et samlet begreb omkring nøgleværdierne: Natur, Kultur, Oplevelser" (Vejle Kommune 2009:13)

93. "Vejle vil markere sig nationalt og internationalt indenfor erhvervsfremme og vidensudvikling. Derfor vil Vejle fortsat være Danmarks førende iværksætterby, førende indenfor udvikling af kreative erhvervsfremmetiltag, foran på det etniske iværksættermiljø, og ikke mindst arbejde innovativt på alle områder inden for erhverv og vidensudvikling. Vejle vil være et fyrtårn for kreative og innovative erhverv ved at synliggøre og understøtte deres kreative potentialer." (Vejle Kommune 2009:10)

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94: "...fremme innovation, dels i andre virksomheder, dels i økonomisk vækst og dels i en mere spændende og kulturelt livlig by og en positiv branding af Vejle, der igen er med til at gøre Vejle til en attraktiv bosætningskommune for borgere og tilflyttere" (Vejle Kommune 2009:11)

95: "moderne vidensøkonomi" ... "kreativitet, viden og evnen til at omsætte viden til produkter og ydelser blandt de væsentligste konkurrenceparametre for at klare sig i den globale konkurrence" (Vejle Kommune 2009:11)

96: "...den betyder ikke at vi rent bogstaveligt skal ses fra månen, men at alle skal gøre sit yderste for at vi bliver kendt i Danmark, eller internationalt" (Interview HS 2009)

97: "Vejle skal kunne ses fra månen - og vi skal høre græsset gro" (Vejle Kommune 2007a:4)

98: "...så da vi skulle lave den her, så tænkte vi, vi skal også have ildsjælenene med, og derfor koblet vi så den på, der hedder 'og vi skal høre græsset gro'. [...] Det er bare et spørgsmål om at sige, yes, vi kan ses fra månen, når vi arbejder med kulturen, så er der også rigtige mange ildsjælen, frivilligheds-præget, og de skal også have plads, ikke. Så vi havde begge del med." (Interview HT 2010)

99: "Altså, der har været utroligt meget, utroligt meget diskussion om den der 'Vejle skal ses fra månen', ikke." (Interview DB 2010)

100: "Men den havde alligevel så meget slagkraft, og blev så meget set, så blev det også brugt." (Interview HT 2010)

101: "Der er heller ikke...og 'Viden, vækst og velfærd' også er rigtig interessant og energigivende, det hedder det bare også i Helsingør og i Svendborg og i Haderslev og, det kan godt være den en ord er skiftet ud, men 'Vejle skal ses fra månen', den har mange set, og bemærket og snakket om..." (Interview HT 2010).

102: "Jeg synes ambitionerne i Vejle efter kommune sammenlægning, de var meget ambitiøse, for at sige det rent ud. Og det er også fin, ambitioner er rigtig godt. Men nogen gange kan det godt være så stor afstand mellem visionen og så realiteterne, at det virker fuldstændigt urealistisk. Og jeg har, jeg synes man har meldt lidt for hårdt ud i Vejle for at være helt ærlig, med den der 'ses fra månen'." (Interview DAJ 2010)

103: "Men i de økonomiske tider vi er, der en den blevet tonet ned, i altså, de tider vi er i lige nu. Og den 'viden, vækst og velfærd', den holder igennem, ikke." (Interview KE 2010).

104: "Vi er meget bevidst om hvor meget vi er i luften og er synligt, og det kan vi næste lade sprede sig som ringer i vandet." (Interview CT 2010).

105: "Vi er meget bevidste om, at vi gerne vil lave noget, der er godt og særligt godt, og også som vi bliver kendte for, men ikke...og det er også en god ting, men jo også for at de borgere, eksempelvis unge mennesker, som bor her, også synes det er fedt at være her." (Interview HT 2010)

106: "...jeg kan hellere have, vi udarbejder vores egne ideer, som vi kalder Vejle modeller, hvis vi kan det." (Interview PH 2010).



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107: “Visionsprojekt skal ses som en investering i fremtiden og har som overordnet mål at fremme den indre sammenhængskraft og Vejles image for at øge nettotilflytningen af borgere og virksomheder samt antallet af arbejdspladser og samtidig øge det gennemsnitlige beskatningsgrundlag.” (Vejle Kommune 2008:3)

108: “Vejles vision er viden, vækst og velfærd! Vores mål er en position blandt de mest attraktive kommuner I Danmark. Et Vejle, der skaber de bedste betingelser for udvikling af både virksomheder og borgere.” (Vejle Kommune 2009d:3).

109: “Et stærkt omdømme skal give endnu flere lyst til at flytte til Vejle Kommune, arbejde hos os, starte nye virksomheder, investere i Vejle eller blot besøge kommunen som gæster og turister.” (Vejle Kommune 2009d:3)

110: “Det giver flere skattekrone i kommunekassen, og det er nødvendigt, hvis vi i fremtiden skal kunne tilbyde borgerne et højt serviceniveau.” (Vejle Kommune 2009d:3)

111: “Her blev Danmark født.” (Vejle Kommune 2009d:6)

112: “...helt unikt” .... “ingen andre kan kopiere” (Vejle Kommune 2009d:12)

113: “...kendes på sine særlige natur- og miljøkvaliteter” (Vejle Kommune 2009c: 4)

114: "...skal bidrage til at understøtte og udvikle det, der gør det særlig attraktivt at leve og drive virksomhed i Vejle Kommune" (Vejle Kommune 2009c:8)

115: "Jeg plejer at gå tilbage til god gammel Søren Kirkegaard, i det her, det handler også om at turde. Og det er ikke kun os, det er politikerne, det er borgerne, det er at turde sammen. Det er at turde at mist fodfæste for en stund, det er jo at turde tage skridtet ud i det blå luft, og tør man ikke det, ja, så er det siger Kirkegaard, at miste sig selv." (Interview CT 2010)

116: "Og så det vi skal være fygteligt meget opmærksom på, det er at turde at afprøve nye ideer, i stedet for at sige, det har vi gjort, luk det, glem det." (Interview CT 2010)

117: "Der er højt til loftet, ikke." (Interview DB 2010)

118: "...du er også nødt til nogle gange at turde nogle, hvor man sige 'at nu tror vi på den ide her', og så det kan godt være at folk, de brokker sig, og synes det er helt skørt" (Interview HS 2009).

119: "Men man skal lige passe på, at man ikke kopiere hinanden, og siger, fordi Horsens, de har koncerter, og er god til at få Bob Dylan og nogle store navne, så skal vi ikke gøre det." (Interview PH 2010)

120: "Jeg hører nogle gange, at vi kan sammenligne os med Aarhus og Hamborg. Det forstår jeg ikke hvorfor vi skal. Vi bliver ikke Aarhus. Vi bliver ikke Hamborg. Men det vi skal, det er at vi skal finde de kommuner, der ligner os, og så forholder os til, hvad er det, at de på nogle parametre, er bedre end os. Vel at mærke de

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parametere som vi selv har defineret, som at være afgørende for os.” (Interview DB 2010)

121: “Vi rejser ud, inspireres og har oplevelser med fra andre byer rundt omkring i verden.” (Vejle Kommune 2009e:2)

122: “...man skal ud at se hvad andre gør, for at få nogle ideer til selv at gøre videre, ikke også.” (Interview PH 2010)

123: “...jeg tror det er det, der har gjort, at vi har det høje ambitionsniveau i Vejle, at man har turdet tage ud at kigge på de her projekter, og prøvet at realisere det når vi kommer hjem.” (Interview PH 2010)

124: “Vejle kommune er blandt landets førende og mest dagsordenssættende:

Vejle er rig på herlighedsområder

Vejle er landets 5. største detailhandelsby

Den 6. største kommune i landet

En af 5 regionshovedstæder

Den 9. største turistkommune – beliggende i det område, der næst efter København tiltrækker flest turister

Udnævnt af Region Syddanmark til at være den bedste bosætningskommune i hele Region Syddanmark. ” (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:6)

125: “blevet kåret til at være den bedste bosætningskommune i Region Syddanmark” (Interview DAJ 2010; also Interview HS 2009)

126: “Bølgen....som er ved at blive Danmarks bedste boligbyggeri i år” (Interview HS 2009)

127: “Kald mig ‘Mr Benchmark’. Jeg vil gerne have flere benchmark. [...] Det kan selvfølgelig, man skal selvfølgelig passe på med ikke at være rigid med det, fordi der er også baggrundsvariablerne, der kan jeg forklare mange ting. Men en god benchmark kan jo godt forklare mange ting...” (Interview DAJ 2010).

128: “...jeg tror det er utroligt vigtig at være opmærksom på, at vi som offentligt i hele Danmark, at vi som offentlige institutioner bliver målet, vejret og vægtet. Jeg tror det er enormt vigtigt at vedkende sig til de forhold.”

“Men igen en gang, det er positivt, ikke. Fordi vi får nogle ting at forholde os til. Vi får nogle rammer at sætte vores virkelighed ind i, og det synes jeg er stærkt. Hvis det bruges, ikke misbruges. Og for guds skyld, ikke bliver en parameter hvor vi ikke kan handle, det må det ikke blive.” (Interview DB 2010)

129: “...men noget sådan satser vi meget på Vejle, så er det for at være attraktiv, vi satser simpelthen på, at jo flere vi kan få til at bo og investere her ikke, put penge ned i Vejle...” (Interview HS 2009)

130: “løbende produktudvikle for at bevare og øge attraktivitet” (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2006:6)

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131: “turismeindsatsen som en indsats for at øge områdets attraktivitet for såvel den besøgende som beboerne” (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2006:6)

132: “Vi vil skabe et stærkt handelsliv ved aktivt at opsøge og udbygge offentlige-private partnerskaber mellem kultur, turisme og detail. Vi vil være regionens mest attraktive handelsområde.” (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2008:7)

133: “...attraktive erhvervs- og boligområder som grundlag for at tiltrække virksomheder og borgere” (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:3)

134: “...skal kendes på sine særlige natur- og miljøkvaliteter, der tiltrækker og fastholder aktive, innovative og kreative mennesker og virksomheder” (Vejle Kommune 2009c:4)

135: “innovative og kreative” (Vejle Kommune 2009c:4)

136: “...store krav til kultur og forbrugsmuligheder og bidrager med en række positive effekter i lokalområdet - øget detailhandel, flere restaurationsbesøg og højere ejendomspriser” (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2008:23)

137: “Jeg tror, at erhvervslivet får det ud af det, at de kan tiltrække nogle vidensmedarbejdere, som ikke vil har valgt Vejle, fordi der ikke var et miljø de kunne være en del af.” (Interview LL 2009)

138: “så at være innovative, det kreative, det er også noget af det vi også gerne vil være kendt for” (Interview HT 2010)

139: "hvis det er innovative og kreative mennesker, så skal der også være kultur, som de synes er interessant" (Interview HT 2010)

140: "...at det faktisk er lettere til at få unge familier, som unge veluddannede akademikere....så det er faktisk lettere at få dem til at arbejde i Vejle, fordi mange synes at Vejle er en mere attraktiv by end vores nabobyer" (Interview HS 2009)

141: "Udviklingen i de senere år har imidlertid rettet op på dette forhold – dels fordi virksomhederne i stigende omfang har tiltrukket højtuddannede, dels fordi en målrettet indsats har gjort ikke mindst Vejle kommune til et meget attraktivt sted for højtuddannede at bosætte sig eller arbejde i." (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:12).

142: "Så er vi nået dertil hvor at alle kommuner [...] men alle kommuner har jo i princippet ordentligt ældre pleje, ordentligt børnepasning, ordentlige skoler. Det bliver ikke en konkurrenceparameter længere. Men det kan kulturen så bliver. Der kan man udmærker sig, fordi alt det andet, det er noget grundvilkår, som kommuner har. Og med kulturen kan du lettere skelle sig ud på." (Interview HT 2010)

143: "...høj kvalitet i byrum og bygninger" ... "lever dag og nat året rundt" (Vejle Kommune 2009e:2)

144: "...en stor og charmerende bykerne med et pulserende byliv fyldt med spændende oplevelser, moderne byfunktioner, flot arkitektur, vandmiljøer, attraktive boliger, smukke gader, alsidigt kultur- og fritidsliv og et dynamisk handelsmiljø" (Vejle Kommune 2009e:2)

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145: "Fornyelse og forskønnelse af midtbyerne som ramme for borgere, butikker og besøgende" (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:3)

146: "...et meget attraktivt indkøbs- og mødested" (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:11)

147: "Strøggaderne, Bryggen, frilæggelse af åen og mange andre aktiviteter har tiltrukket massive private investeringer og stærkt øget omsætning. Vejles centrale placering og rollen som regionens politisk/administrative center har tilsvarende øget aktivitet og investering i hotel-, restaurant- og konferencevirksomheder." (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2009:11)

148: "Vejle ligger øverste på Handelsbalancen 2008. Det er vi stolte af, fordi det beviser, at Vejle er en attraktiv handelsby med et stort opland. Vi har smuk natur og en afvekslende by med broer, å-løb, hyggelige sidegader og et godt miks af butikker. Gennem en årrække har vi haft en klar strategi om at udvikle bymidten. Og den strategi har vist sig at være den helt rigtige vej til målet - at blive kåret til Danmarks bedste detailhandelsby." (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2008:5)

149: "Destinationens tiltrækningskraft ligger i en stærk bymidte med et bredt butiksudvalg og fokus på shoppertainment. Fremtidens forbrugere bliver en form for turister, der opfatter shopping som en oplevelsesrejse og indkøbene som souvenirs. Sammensmeltningen af oplevelser og shopping giver derfor også nye muligheder for turister, som søger det unikke i natur-, by-, produkt- og sanseoplevelser." (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2008:17)

150: "Spændende events giver liv og dynamik i byen og tiltrækker kunder, som normalt lægger deres forbrug andre steder. Fokus på udvikling af bymidten giver

store muligheder. Den geografiske spredning er lille og varieret nok til at iscenesætte oplevelser på et utal af måder, og samtidig nyder detailhandlen godt af god visuel kontakt mellem butikker, kunst, kultur og natur. Ved at bruge byrummet til oplevelseszoner med shoppertainment foldes detailstrategien helt ud.” (Vejle Erhvervsudvikling 2008:14).